

The LOVE of LIFE

Retold in English by
G B Talovich

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THE LOVE OF LIFE

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Welcome

1. THE CRYING APE.....	1
2. A TURTLE'S GRATITUDE.....	3
3. CH'ENG T'ANG AND THE NET.....	7
4. TZU CH'AN AND THE FISH.....	9
5. JADE CHOPSTICK SOUP.....	11
6. THE DEER THAT SAVED ITS RESCUER.....	13
7. ELEPHANTS TO THE RESCUE.....	15
8. THE TITMOUSE'S REWARD.....	17
9. AN ARM FOR A LIFE.....	19
10. EELS IN THE URN.....	21
11. BIG HSU'S TONGUE.....	23
12. MOANING AND GROANING FOR THREE MONTHS.....	25
13. MY LAP IS YOUR PERCH.....	27
14. THE FREE LIFE POND.....	29
15. THE MAN WHO DIDN'T MIND BEING EXECUTED.....	31
16. SAVING THE DRAGON KING'S SON.....	33
17. THE SAMI WHO RESCUED THE ANTS.....	35
18. THE MOTHER DEER.....	37
19. A DRAGON IN DISGUISE.....	39
20. HOW THE TENTH BECAME THE FIRST.....	41
21. BURIAL BY BIRDS.....	43
22. GENERAL MAO AND THE TURTLE.....	45
23. BEES PREVENT A MISCARRIAGE OF JUSTICE.....	47

24. LONG LIFE, HAPPINESS, AND HONOR.....	49
25. RELEASING TRAPPED RABBITS.....	51
26. DEAD BODIES ARE TO BE BURIED.....	53
27. THE GOAT'S TONGUE.....	55
28. THE RESULTS OF CRUELTY.....	57
29. DOCTOR TURTLE.....	59
30. THE CHICKENS THAT FOUGHT OFF A TIGER.....	61
31. MERCY BEGINS AT THE DINNER TABLE.....	63
32. AN IDEAL BIRTHDAY PARTY.....	65
33. FATE CAN BE CHANGED.....	67
34. SAVING LIVES FOR A LONGER LIFE.....	69
35. THE CHILDLESS RICH MAN.....	71
36. LIFE IS PRECIOUS.....	73
37. A BAD STORY.....	75
38. A TERRIBLE DEATH.....	77
39. A DREADFUL BIRTHDAY FEAST.....	79
40. THE SOUL-COLLECTOR VISITS.....	81
41. KILLING A SNAKE.....	83
42. EELS TAKE REVENGE.....	85
43. POISON WANG LOST HIS TONGUE.....	87
44. SWEEPING SNAILS.....	89
45. THE PRICE OF BREAKING LAWS.....	91
46. EXECUTED BY EELS.....	93
47. BLOOD-STAINED MONEY.....	95
48. BIRDS PAY HOMAGE TO THE KING.....	97
49. IMMUNITY WITHOUT VACCINATIONS.....	99
50. THE REVENGE OF THE FIELD CHICKENS.....	101
51. COOKED TURTLE.....	103
52. THE POWER OF MERCY.....	105

53. OLD LADY K'UNG	107
54. NO QUARTER GIVEN	109
55. ONE HUNDRED LIVES	111
56. WILD GEESE	113
57. THE SNAKE'S PEARLS	115
58. THE TURTLE WHO HEALED THE MAID	117
59. LOOK, LOOK, THEY'RE FREE AGAIN	119
60. A KIND OFFICIAL	121
61. MASTER HSIN ENDS A DROUGHT	123
62. HOW AH-3 GOT OUT OF THE WELL	125
63. LOTUS POND AND THE CENTIPEDE	129
64. ELEVEN LIVES AS A COW	131
65. TEN DAYS BEFORE THE PLOW	133
66. BULL'S HEAD	135
67. TRY SOME BEEF?	137
68. THE BUTCHER'S END	139
69. SLAUGHTER GOD	141
70. BUTCHER STEW	143
71. A PICNIC OR A LIFE?	145
72. WHIPPED BY THE GOD	147
73. A DEAD DOG'S REVENGE	149
74. GOING TO THE DOGS	151
75. THE MARKSMAN	153
76. THE LITTER OF FOUR	155
77. LADIES IN THE PIGPEN	157
78. DEATH BY LIGHTNING	161
79. THE BUTCHER'S FACE	163
80. A TYPICAL HUNTING ACCIDENT	165
81. THE THIRD FOX	167

82. THE SEAL IN THE RIVER.....	169
83. THE MURDERED CHICKEN.....	171
84. BANDS OF RED.....	173
85. THE HUNTER'S CONSCIENCE.....	175
86. CHAO CH'UN AND RIVER TURTLE.....	177
87. OLD HSU'S KNEES.....	179
88. HAPPY CRABS.....	181
89. THE BEE'S KISS.....	183
90. 46'S END.....	185
91. GREED.....	187
92. A HAPPY MAN.....	189
93. A TRIP TO HEAVEN.....	191
94. ANOTHER CHANCE.....	193
95. A WISE MAN'S WORDS.....	195
96. THE TADPOLES' GRATITUDE.....	197
97. SPARE AN OLD HEN.....	199
98. TURTLE MAIL.....	201
99. A CLOSE CALL.....	203
100. THE BEST GIFT POSSIBLE.....	205
In Closing.....	207

WELCOME

You are about to enter a different world, a world you may scarcely have known existed.

Although most of the stories you will read here took place in China, similar events are going on around you every day. These things happen to you, to me, to your family and teachers, to every living creature on earth.

But you may not be aware of what's going on because you do not understand. If you do not understand, that is because you have never learned how to see.

Most of these stories have never been told in English before. This is a new realm of experience for you, so you will have to keep your eyes open and be ready to learn. Some of these stories you may not understand, others you may not even believe. But every single one of these one hundred stories is true.

They are true because they are simple accounts of universal laws. Western science already knows about how the sun helps plants grow, how the moon makes tides, and many other everyday facts that are not obvious at first glance, and were unknown to people long ago. But there are also many facts that science has not yet discovered. Some of these things were well known to people long ago in other cultures. Just because science has not yet discovered them does not mean they are not true. It means that they are waiting for us to learn about them.

Every single story here teaches an important lesson for you. If you learn these lessons well, you will win a lifetime supply of health, wisdom, and happiness.

If you ignore these lessons, and break the laws of the universe... maybe one day you might become the one hundred first story!

Are you ready now? Let's begin!

THE CRYING APE

Long, long ago, a file of chariots rumbled quickly across the plain late one spring. The soldiers wore sparkling armor. Banners fluttered in the breeze.

Following them came several generals with their swords and spears. They were followed by a beautiful chariot. Sitting in the chariot was the great King of Ch'u.

Every year the King took a trip through his kingdom to inspect his land, to hunt, to train his troops, and to get out of his stuffy old palace.

The King had a general called Yang Youchi who is very famous for his archery. Even now, over two thousand years later, people still remember what a good shot he was. He never missed. The King trusted him. During the great hunt, the rabbits and deer and all the wild animals ran here and there in panic, but nowhere was safe from the arrows of General Yang Youchi. If he shot one hundred times, he hit his aim one hundred times.

On the plain was a huge old tree. As they passed, the soldiers heard a noise. They saw an ape in the branches above their heads. It jumped up and down disrespectfully, mocking the hunting soldiers. It threw a nut at them.

"Okay, pretty boy, I'll teach you a lesson," said an archer as he aimed at the ape. But as he shot his arrow, the ape dodged, and the arrow hissed harmlessly through the branches. A shout of laughter went up from the troops.

"Lucky," snorted the soldier. "Take that!"

He shot another arrow, and this time the ape didn't dodge -- it snatched the arrow out of the air! Then it sniffed the arrow contemptuously before breaking it in two.

Now the soldiers were mad. They shot arrows at it, but the ape was so clever and so quick that it caught their arrows in mid-air and mocked them even more.

When the King saw how disrespectful the ape was, he ordered General Yang to go shoot down that smart-aleck ape.

The ape seemed to understand, because as soon as General Yang rode toward the tree, the ape began to cry. Tears rolled down its face, and it sobbed and howled very piteously.

The King asked, "Why is the ape crying?"

Yang Youchi answered, "It must know that my arrows never miss, so no matter how cunning it may be, it must die now, at your highness' command. That is why it is crying."

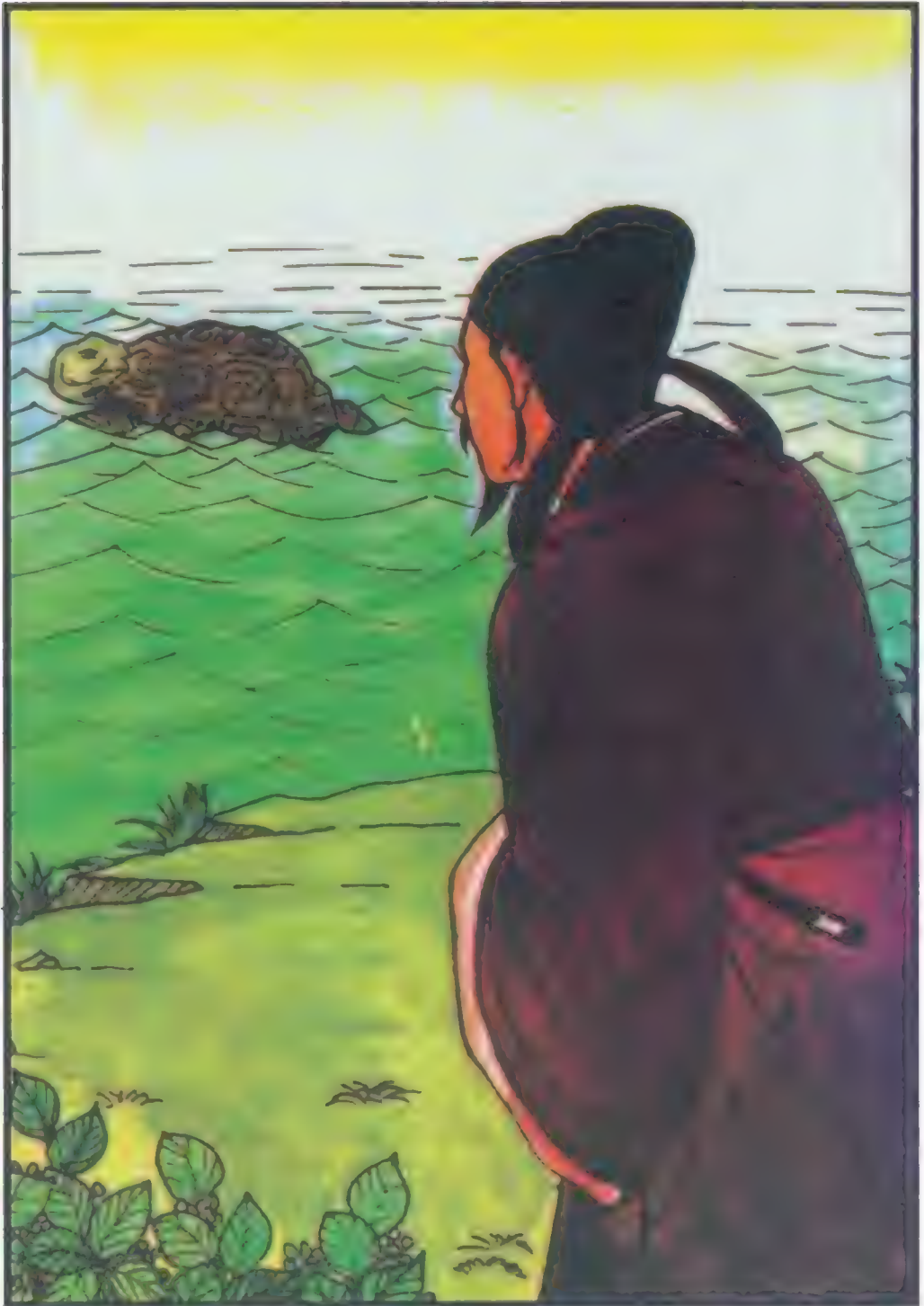
The King hung his head in thought. How sad the ape was! All the other animals must be suffering, too. His royal heart filled with mercy. He told General Yang to put away his weapons, and called off the hunt, so that no more animals would be hurt.

When he returned to his capital ahead of schedule, all the people there found out that the King had been moved by an ape's tears. The people of Ch'u were all very happy to have such a kind and loving King, so they worked very hard for their country, and from then on, Ch'u was strong and powerful for hundreds of years.

THE CRYING APE



A TURTLE'S GRATITUDE



II

A TURTLE'S GRATITUDE

During the Chin dynasty of the fourth century, there was a middle aged man in Shanyin called K'ung Yu. He was an official for the government, but he had practically the lowest official position in the whole dynasty. His position was low, and so was his pay. Times were hard for him.

Once he saw a turtle someone was getting ready to eat. He felt sorry for it, so he bought the turtle and took it to the river. There he let it go.

The turtle seemed to understand that Yu had saved it from the soup. As it swam away, it kept looking back at him. Yu watched it until he couldn't see it any more.

Years later, Yu had reached a better position. Leading troops, he quelled a rebellion. For his great deeds, the Emperor raised him to the rank of Lord, a high and powerful position.

The official insignia for the rank of Lord is a metal seal, or chop. When K'ung Yu was promoted, the royal artisans cast a seal for him, but for some reason, it came out with a turtle on top, and the turtle was looking back over its shoulder. They thought that was strange, so they melted the seal down, made a new mold, and cast it again, but it still came out with a turtle looking back over its shoulder! The artisans tried over and over again. Every time they made the mold very carefully, and everybody inspected the mold. Every time, the mold was fine, but every time they cast the seal, it came out with a turtle on top of it, and every time, the turtle's head was looking back over its shoulder!

The artisans thought this was uncanny. They decided to go to the new Lord and see what he thought about it. They knelt in front of him, and said, "My Lord, as directed by our Emperor of Ten Thousand Years, we have tried to make a seal for you as sign of your new rank, but every time we cast the mold, the seal comes out with a turtle on top, and the turtle is always looking back over its shoulder."

"Carry on," K'ung Yu directed. "Do it over again."

The artisans followed his command, but once again, the seal appeared with a turtle on top, looking back over its shoulder. K'ung Yu was perplexed. The news of this strange occurrence spread, and eventually reached the royal ears of the Emperor.

The Emperor called K'ung Yu in to explain why his seal always came with a turtle, but K'ung Yu was at a loss to explain.

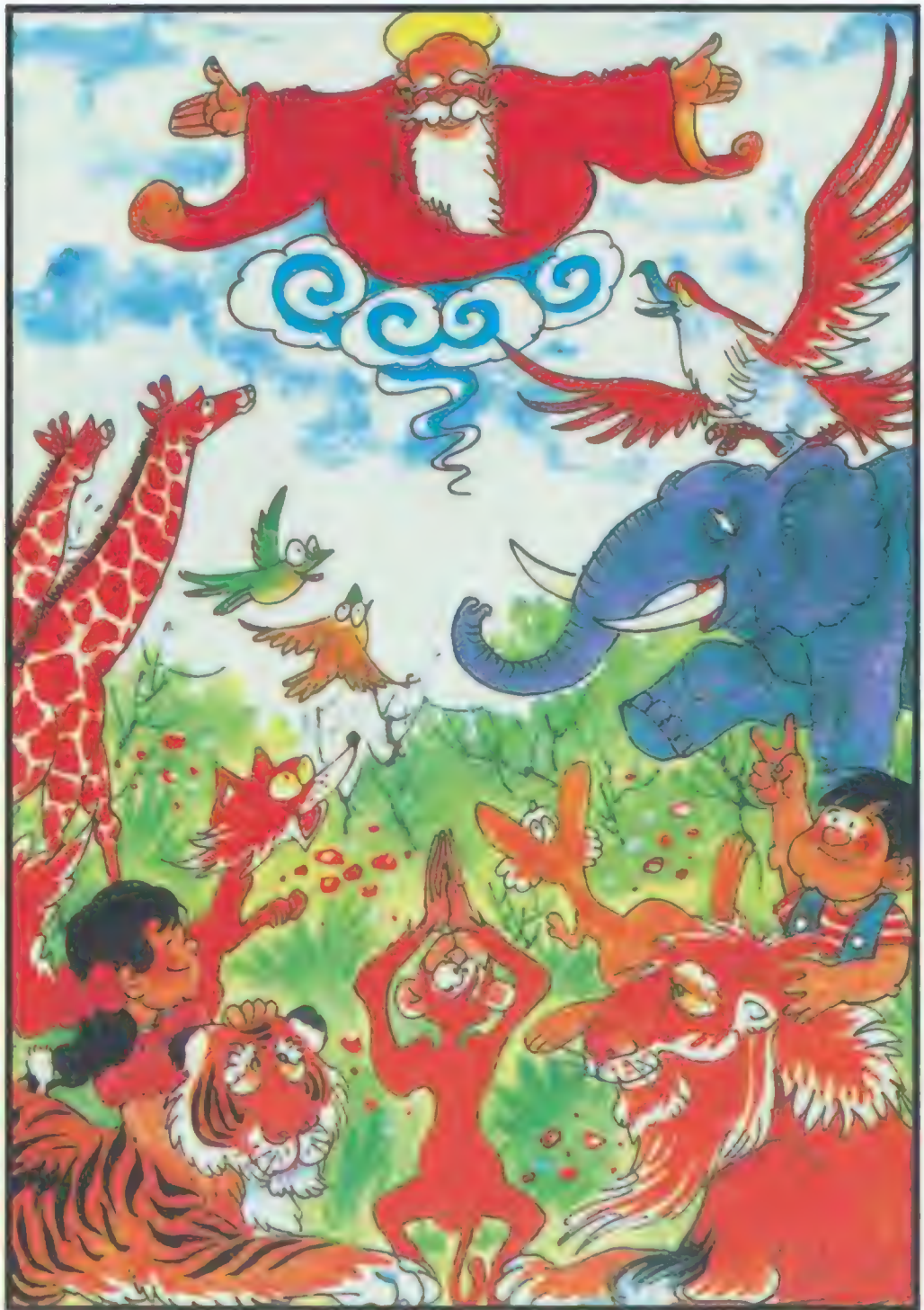
On his way home, K'ung Yu suddenly remembered something. The next day in court, he reported, "Your Highness's loyal minister has considered the manner of the seal and the unexplainable turtles, and perhaps has found a reason.

"Many years ago, this minister happened to see a fisherman preparing to cook and eat a turtle he had caught. This minister felt sorry for the turtle, and so purchased the said turtle from the fisherman and released it by the river. The turtle seemed to understand, for it swam along the surface of the water and looked back as if in gratitude.

"Your Highness has currently granted me the rank of Lord; the official seal has a turtle on it; this must be a sign that I have had the opportunity to win such favor from Your Highness due to the gratitude of that turtle, which must have

moved Heaven on my behalf."

The Emperor told the court, "Those who do good will reap good rewards. The Lord K'ung is an excellent example."



CH'ENG T'ANG AND THE NET



III

CH'ENG T'ANG AND THE NET

More than 3,500 years ago, there was a very kind and wise emperor called Ch'eng T'ang. Every year he traveled around his empire to visit all of his people and see if there was anything the government could do for them.

One beautiful day, the birds were singing and the beasts were enjoying the nice weather. The Emperor smiled as he heard their pleasant calls. Then he saw huge nets spread where all those animals would get caught. He heard a trapper praying in a loud voice. This is what the trapper prayed:

May all the birds in the sky,
May all the beasts on the ground,
May all the animals from north, east, west, and south,
Come into my net,
Let not one of them escape!

Emperor Ch'eng T'ang was upset to find such a greedy, heartless trapper, but he was also a very wise monarch. He did not command the trapper to stop hunting. Instead, with his own imperial hands, he took down three sides of the nets, leaving only one side.

The trapper wondered what was going on, but he couldn't just go up and punch the Emperor. Then he heard Ch'eng T'ang praying out loud. This is what the Emperor prayed:

May all who wish to dodge to the left, dodge to the left;
May all who wish to dodge to right, dodge to the right;
May all who wish to go over the nets, go over the nets;
May all who wish to duck under the nets, duck under the nets;
Only those who do not wish to live any more
May enter my nets.

The trapper realized that he had been greedy and mean. He told everyone how kind their Emperor was, so all the people trusted Ch'eng T'ang. The dynasty Ch'eng T'ang founded, the Shang, ruled China for over 600 years.

IV

TZU CH'AN AND THE FISH

Tzu Ch'an was a statesman who lived in Cheng during the Spring and Autumn period, some 2,500 years ago. Confucius praised his wisdom highly. Tzu Ch'an was so smart and so kind that Chinese people still honor him today. He helped the poor and rescued those in danger. He enjoyed doing good, and in particular, he never liked to kill anything.

One day a friend sent him a present, several live fish. They were fat and looked delicious. They would certainly make a delicious meal! When Tzu Ch'an received this gift, he was very grateful that his friend was so thoughtful. He accepted the gift happily. Then he called his servant.

"Take these fish and put them in the fishpond in the yard."

His servant said, "Master, this kind of fish is a rare delicacy. If you put them in the fishpond, the water is not as clear as a mountain stream's, so their flesh will not be as soft, and they will not taste as good. You should eat them right away."

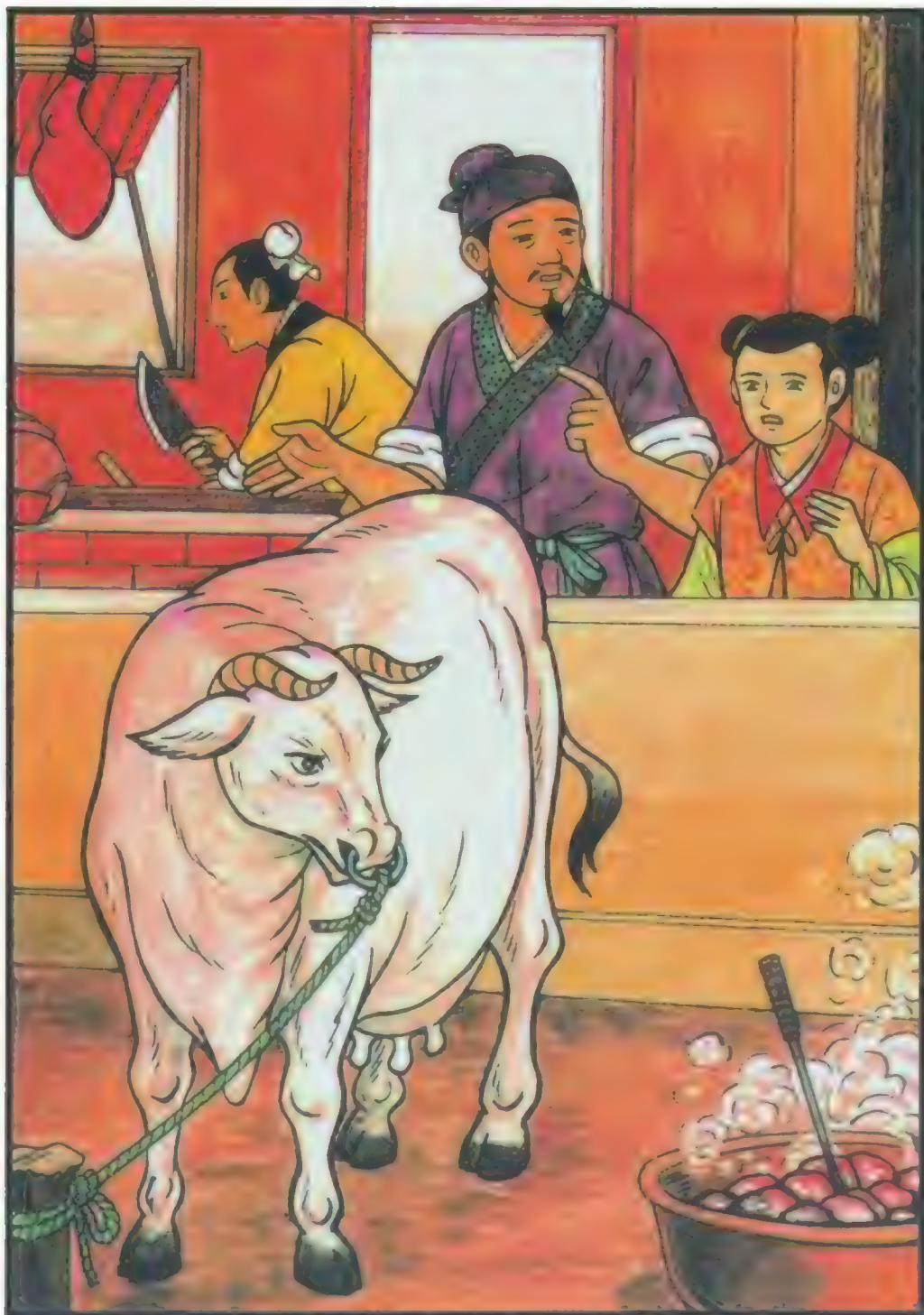
Tzu Ch'an smiled. "I am the boss here. Do as you are told. How could I murder these poor, innocent fish just for the sake of their taste? I couldn't bear to do that."

The servant had to obey orders. As she poured the fish into the pond, she told them, "You sure are lucky fish! If you had been given to anybody but my master, you would already be cooking in the wok by now!"

TZU CH'AN AND THE FISH



JADE CHOPSTICK SOUP



JADE CHOPSTICK SOUP

In Wenchow in Chekiang, there lived a boy called Hsiao Chen. One night a god in golden armor appeared in a dream and said, "Son, you can only live to be 18 years old." When Hsiao Chen woke up, he was scared. He felt very sad that he would die so young.

Hsiao Chen's father was a government official. He was very honest, so he got promoted and sent to Szechuan, another province far away. Hsiao Chen did not want to leave home, because he knew he couldn't live very long. His father didn't know about Chen's dream, and insisted on taking him with him.

The day after his father got to his new post, the officials there prepared a party to welcome him, and of course Hsiao Chen was invited. For very special parties in Szechuan, after three courses comes the main dish, called Jade Chopstick Soup.

The way they made Jade Chopstick Soup was very cruel. They heated an iron chopstick until it was red hot, and then pushed that into a cow's udder. The milk in the udder would stick to the chopstick, so when they pulled out the chopstick, it looked like jade, and some people thought it was delicious.

While Chen was waiting for the dinner to begin, he happened to go into the kitchen. He saw a cow tied to a stake, and an iron chopstick roasting on hot coals. He asked the cook what was happening, and the cook told him just what they were going to do. When Chen heard that, he ran back to his father and begged his father to stop them. He said, "They are going to stick a red hot chopstick into a cow's udder just to make a tasty dish, but think how much the cow will suffer! Please, Father, make them stop! Don't let them make this horrible dish!"

His father was a kind man, so he immediately ordered them to change the menu and release the cow.

A few nights later, the god in golden armor again appeared to Hsiao Chen in a dream. This time, he said, "Son, you have done a good deed. You will not die young, and what's more, you will be so successful that one day you will become one of the highest officials in all of China. This is because you have a kind heart."

Hsiao Chen did grow up to win a very high post in the imperial government, and he lived to be more than ninety years old.

VI

THE DEER THAT SAVED ITS RESCUER

The murmuring brook in the green forest flowed past glorious wildflowers which decorated the little house there.

The sun shone high in the sky. Suddenly, a deer raced into the courtyard of the house, where a little boy was playing. The deer hooked the boy's clothing with its antlers. This scared the little boy so much he let out a howl that brought his mother running out to see what the matter was. She came out just in time to see the deer running off toward the mountains with her little boy.

Of course the boy's mother was horrified! She ran after the deer as fast as she could go, and not too far away, she found her little boy sitting safely on the grass. When he saw his mother coming, the little boy laughed and stretched out his arms to her. His mother scooped him up. She was so happy that she cried.

She hurried back to their home with her precious son. When she got there, she stopped dead in her tracks, amazed at what she saw. The huge tree in back of their house had toppled over while she was out chasing after her son. The whole house was crushed under its enormous weight. The walls were squashed, and all the roofing tiles were smashed into powder. The chickens and dogs in the house were all dead. If she and her little boy had been home...

Then the little boy's mother remembered the day about a year before when a deer fleeing a hunter had run into her house. She felt sorry for the poor, frightened deer, so she covered it with some clothes. When the hunter rushed in after his quarry, he couldn't find it. He thought it must have gone out the back door, so he kept chasing it, and when he was far, far away, she uncovered the deer and let it return to the forest.

The deer seemed to understand that she had saved its life, because as it left, it kept bowing its head to her, as if thanking her for her mercy.

She never imagined that the deer could remember her kindness. The deer somehow knew the tree was going to fall and crush her, so it came back to show its gratitude.

When the boy's mother remembered all this, she said, "Saving the life of another is the same as saving your own life."

THE DEER THAT SAVED ITS RESCUER



ELEPHANTS TO THE RESCUE



VII

ELEPHANTS TO THE RESCUE

Some two thousand years ago, in a river in ancient India, there was a pond full of fish. They lived happily in the clear water. They jumped and swam or just floated around enjoying their watery home.

Then for a long time it didn't rain. Every day some more water evaporated, until the pond had almost dried up. If the pond dried up, all of the fish would die under the hot, dry sun.

The sun kept beating down on the dry earth. An old man happened to walk by the pond. He saw the water was almost gone. His heart filled with mercy. He went straight to the king and said, "The water in the fish's pond is almost dry, and the fish are in great danger. If it pleases your majesty, you might send twenty elephants to tote water to save those fish."

The king was a Buddhist, so as soon as he heard the old man's request, he said, "It is wonderful that you have such a kind and merciful heart. Go to the royal elephant stables and take as many elephants as you feel you need to tote water to save those poor, suffering fish."

When the old man heard the king's reply, he took his two sons to the royal elephant stables and selected twenty of the best elephants. Then he went to the breweries and borrowed as many skins as he could -- in India in those days, liquor was stored and transported in skins. Then the three of them led the twenty elephants to the biggest river in the region, and filled all the skins with water. The twenty royal elephants carried the heavy skins full of water to the fish pond, and they poured all the water into the pond.

After many trips, the pond was full again, just as it had been before the drought. The fish in the pond were saved! They leapt and played and swam back and forth.

When the old man saw how happy the fish were, and watched the ripples on the water's surface, all of the worries and sadness that the long years had gathered in his tired old heart were immediately swept away.

As the day turned into night, he and his sons cheerfully led the twenty elephants back to the royal stables and went to tell their king the good news.

VIII

THE TITMOUSE'S REWARD

During the Han dynasty, about two thousand years ago, to the north of Huayin Mountain, there lived a family called Yang. They were farmers, and had only one child, who was so precious to him that they named him Treasure: Pao.

Yang Pao was not only clever, kind, and quick-witted, but he was also very good looking with his clear eyebrows and bright eyes. His parent shaved all of his hair off except for two locks on the top, which they tied into two knots. Everybody agreed that he was very cute.

Yang Pao loved nature. He spent a lot of time playing in the forests of Huayin Mountain. One day when he was nine years old, he was playing outdoors as usual. All of a sudden he heard a cry above him. He looked up and saw a hunting owl had just snatched a little bird, a titmouse, out of the air. The owl was so startled to discover someone watching it hunt that it dropped the titmouse, which fell to the ground. It was so dazed it just lay there without moving.

Ants then came to take it away for food, but the titmouse had been hurt by the owl's claws and the fall to the ground, so it couldn't move. Yang Pao ran over and picked the titmouse up, brushing away the ants. He took the titmouse home and raised it in a bamboo cage.

He loved his little bird. He fed it chrysanthemum petals and tended to its wounds until it was strong enough to fly. Then he took it to the forest and let it go.

"You're free now! Watch out for owls! Goodbye!!"

Not long afterwards, he had a strange dream. A child dressed in brown clothes came to thank him for saving his life. He presented Pao with four priceless white jade bracelets, saying, "Sir, I am an envoy of the Heavenly Queen. You have saved my life. I would like to show my gratitude by presenting these four immaculate jade bracelets to you, with my blessing that your children and grandchildren be as spotless as pure jade, and hold posts in the top ranks of the government."

Yang Pao did not want to take the gift, but the little boy dressed in brown insisted, so he finally took the bracelets. As soon as he did, he woke up and found that it had just been a dream.

"That sure was a strange dream," he thought, shaking his head.

Yang Pao's sons, grandsons, great-grandsons, and great-grandsons were as spotless as pure jade. For four generations, his descendants all held posts in the top ranks of the government.

THE TITMOUSE'S REWARD





IX

AN ARM FOR A LIFE

It was a clear, sunny day. The weather was beautiful.

The Buddha was walking through a forest when he saw a huge eagle chasing a dove. Just as the eagle was about to swoop down and catch it, the dove spotted the Buddha and went to his side for safety. The Buddha protected it from the eagle.

The eagle perched on a nearby branch and said, "You can save the dove, but that means you're starving me. You're really mean."

The Buddha kindly said, "Tell me what you want to eat, and I'll get it for you."

The eagle replied, "I eat meat."

The Buddha took out a knife and cut a piece of meat from the flesh of his own arm. He gave it to the eagle, but the eagle complained, "There's more meat on a dove than that," so the Buddha sliced off another piece from his arm, but he was getting down to the bone where there's not much meat. Finally he had cut all the meat off his arm, but there still wasn't as much as the weight of the dove.

The eagle asked the Buddha, "Are you sorry you've ruined your own arm?"

The Buddha answered, "I am not in the least bit sorry. My mission is to save all living things. What difference does a bit of flesh off my arm make?"

The eagle sneered, "You're just saying that to sound good."

The Buddha said, "If my words are the sincere truth, may my arm grow back as good as new." When the Buddha made this oath, the flesh on his arm did grow back, just like new.

When the eagle saw this, he flew up into the sky and revealed his true shape: he was the Emperor of Heaven! He had heard that the Buddha was kind, so he had come to test him. He showed his deepest respect to the Buddha and then flew away, singing great praises for the Buddha's mercy.

Before long, everyone knew that the Buddha had cut away his own arm in order to save a dove.

EELS IN THE URN

The Wanli period of the Ming Dynasty in China lasted from 1573 to 1620, the same year the Pilgrims reached Massachusetts in America. At that time, in the beautiful Chinese city of Hangchow, the city Marco Polo called Kinsai and praised as the grandest, most beautiful city on earth, as splendid as paradise, lived a very rich man named Yu.

Mr. Yu enjoyed doing good deeds. He never killed anything.

At the time of our story, a family in his neighborhood had been robbed of almost everything they had. Mr. Yu generously donated money to help his neighbors get back on their feet. His neighbor's wife was deeply touched by his kindness. One day she happened to get ten eels, so she sent them over to Mr. Yu's house so he could cook them for his aged mother. Even though eels are a great delicacy for most Chinese, the Yus never killed anything, so their servants put the eels into a big pottery urn and prepared to let them go someday. What with one thing and another, everybody forgot all about the eels in the urn.

Some time later, Mr. Yu's aged mother dreamed that a group of ten people came into her room and knelt down before her bed. How strangely they were dressed! Every one had on tan clothes and a pointed cap. They said, "We beg your mercy! Please save our lives!" Then they left.

Old Mrs. Yu woke up. She was confused by this weird dream. She didn't know how she was supposed to save anybody's life. She just didn't know what to do, so, being a sensible old lady, she went to ask her fortune teller to advise her.

Her fortune teller cast his sticks and examined the date and looked at her palm and said, "Do not worry your august head. This is a lucky dream, not an unlucky dream. These are living creatures which want you to save their lives. You need not look too far. They are right in your own honorable house."

She hurried home and turned everything topsy-turvy to find the lives to save. Finally one of the servants remembered the eels in the urn. They realized there were ten eels, just as there were ten people in the dream.

When Mrs. Yu heard about this, she said, "We almost took ten lives by accident!" Right away, she had the eels taken to the lake and released.

The eels lived happily ever after, and the Yus got richer and richer.

EELS IN THE URN





BIG HSU'S TONGUE

From a run-down old storefront came a hair-raising shriek followed by the sound of a body falling to the ground.

The neighbors came rushing in to find out what was the matter, and there in a pool of blood they saw the cow butcher Big Hsu.

Blood was still flowing from his corpse. He died because his tongue had been cut out by his own butcher's knife. The whole neighborhood started gossiping about how he died.

This is what had happened. Big Hsu made his living slaughtering cows. Every time before he killed a cow, he cut out its tongue and ate it with liquor. He didn't slaughter the cow until he had finished his grisly feast. Nobody knew how many cow's tongues he had eaten. Think how much it hurt the cows to have their tongues cut out!

That day, Big Hsu stuck his knife in the door sill for a moment while he did something else. Just then he heard two big rats fighting on top of the door sill. He looked up to watch the fight. His mouth was open. The rats fought so furiously that they knocked the knife out of the door frame and it fell right into Big Hsu's open mouth and chopped off his tongue. He fell down and died.

When the neighbors heard how Big Hsu had died, they shook their heads and sighed, saying, "Big Hsu didn't think a thing about killing an animal. He cut out the cows' tongues to eat with his liquor, because he liked the taste. And in the end, two rats chopped off his tongue and killed him. They took his life just like he took those cows' lives. The Buddhists must be right when they talk about cause and effect and your just desserts!"

XII

MOANING AND GROANING FOR THREE MONTHS

The little lamp fluttered in the cold wind.

Some Chinese believe that dog meat warms you up in cold weather, so on this chilly day, there were no empty seats in the dog meat restaurant. The air was full of the smell of dog meat and the sounds of the raucous crowds.

In the back of the restaurant, to the right, Ts'ao Shengyuan was putting another dead dog into the kettle to boil. He had been a dog butcher for years, and finally opened his own restaurant. Business was good enough to hire a helper.

His helper was just saying to him, "Brother Ts'ao, this one is really meaty!"

Ts'ao Shengyuan chuckled. "You said it! This fat dog is going to make a lot of money for us!"

They continued getting their knives ready as the water to boil the dog heated up.

Suddenly, the dog leapt out of the kettle. It seemed to fly through the air, straight at Ts'ao. It pounced at him and bit him in the neck. Ts'ao shrieked for help!

All the customers in the restaurant came to see what the matter was. They saw the dog biting Ts'ao's neck. His blood was pumping out of the wound. What a terrible sight!

After he got the dog off his neck, Ts'ao Shengyuan went to many doctors to treat his wound, but no matter what kind of medicine they put on it, it kept rotting and getting worse. It hurt so much that Ts'ao moaned and groaned day and night.

After three months of pain, Ts'ao finally died. All the people in the area who liked dog meat gave it up, because they realized that the meat of any animal is produced through enormous suffering.

MOANING AND GROANING FOR THREE MONTHS



MY LAP IS YOUR PERCH



XIII

MY LAP IS YOUR PERCH

Long ago, an old, old hermit lived deep in the woods. He was so kind that he never killed any living creature.

One day he was sitting under an ancient tree. Just as he began to meditate, he felt a gust of wind coming towards him. "That's strange," he thought, and opened his eyes. He saw a little bird sitting in his lap. The bird was not at all flustered to be sitting there. It was quite at home, as if it were perching on a twig. The hermit recited the Buddha Amitabha's name, and said to himself, "So you think my lap is a perch? Well, then, I can hardly refuse you. Amitabha, this is good. This is good."

Then the little bird curled up and went to sleep, right there in his lap. The hermit was afraid to disturb its dreams, so he began looking into his own heart, and immediately entered a very deep state of meditation.

Much later, he left his mediation state, but the bird was still sleeping soundly. He didn't move, because he didn't want to bother it. He said very quietly, "Amitabha. Just keep sleeping. You can fly away when you've slept your full."

Finally, the little bird woke up. It flapped its wings and stretched its legs. It chirped quietly a few times. Then it straightened its feathers with its beak, and flapped its wings a few more times. Only then did it fly away.

When it had flown away, the old hermit got to his feet. He watched his little friend until it was out of sight. Then he left the tree and went back to his little hut.

XIV

THE FREE LIFE POND

The peaks of T'ient'ai Mountain in Chekiang are green and black. They stand like an ornamental screen. People come from far away to enjoy the scenery here.

For thousands of years, there have been many temples in these beautiful mountains. The head of a big temple there was called Chihyi. He lived from about 539 to 597 AD. Because he was so wise, the Emperor Yang of the Sui dynasty gave him the title The Wise Master, and this is how he is known even today.

At the time, The Wise Master felt that people were too cruel, especially when they wanted something to eat. They would kill almost anything that moved and eat it.

He decided something had to be done. But how? Monks don't have any money. So The Wise Master became a beggar for several years until he finally got enough money to get some land and hire some workers to build him a pond.

When people saw that, they laughed and said The Wise Master is pretty dumb!

Because he was so wise, The Wise Master didn't care how much they laughed at him. He kept up work on his pond.

When the workers had spare time, he told them about Buddhism. He said, "The sutras (the holy books of Buddhism) say, 'All living creatures have Buddha nature.' You may not think much of a fish or a crab, but they too can become Buddhas.

"Wild animals all have Buddha natures, too. If somebody gets killed by a wild animal, we think it's tragic. We feel sorry for that person. Hasn't it ever occurred to you that when you kill a fish, the other fish think it's tragic, and feel sorry for the dead fish?"

The Wise Master explained that he was making a pond so anybody who had a fish or crab could have a place to release it and let it live out its life in peace. He called his pond the Free Life Pond.

The workmen were moved, and the people who had laughed at him felt sorry for being so mean. They became Buddhists, and stopped killing animals to eat their meat.

Other temples copied his idea. If you have a chance to visit a Chinese Buddhist temple, you can probably see their Free Life Pond, full of happy fish and crabs and turtles that are safe from the worry of being cooked and eaten.

THE FREE LIFE POND



THE MAN WHO DIDN'T MIND BEING EXECUTED



THE MAN WHO DIDN'T MIND BEING EXECUTED

The real name of the Master Yungming was Yenshou, and after he died, the Emperor bestowed the name Chihchueh on him, but everyone calls him Master Yungming because he lived in the Yungming Temple of Hangchou.

Before he left the householder's life and became a monk, he was called Wang. When he was in his twenties, he was an official in the treasury of Yuhang county near Hangchou. He felt sorry for fish and shrimp that had been caught to be eaten, so sometimes he took money out of the treasury to buy them. Then he took them to the shore and released them.

Unfortunately, that wasn't his money, and finally he got caught. He was thrown in jail.

The judge didn't believe he was spending the money to set little animals free. He convicted Wang of stealing government money. This is a very serious crime. In those days, the punishment was beheading -- the convict was dragged out to a public place where everybody could watch and his head was chopped off with a big sword. Those who saw this horrifying punishment were always scared!

King Chungyi of Wuyueh knew that Wang was a very kind man and released a lot of little animals. Maybe he bought the animals with government money? He told the officials at the execution to observe Wang's words and deeds very carefully. When Wang was dragged out to get his head chopped off, he did not seem frightened at all. He was not even nervous. In fact, he seemed to be very relaxed and cheerful. The executioner had never seen anything like this! He very respectfully asked him, "All the other convicts I've ever beheaded have trembled and cried. I have never seen anyone like you before. How can you be so calm? You're about to be killed for using the government's money, you know."

Wang answered, "Yes, I did use the government's money, but I didn't spend any of it on myself. I used it to buy animals and set them free. So what is there for me to be afraid of? As soon as you chop off my head, I can go to the Pure Land of Amitabha. Isn't that wonderful? I can hardly wait!"

When the officials in charge of the execution heard that, they knew that Wang was honest. They admired his integrity and his calm bravery. They told the executioner to let him go, and pardoned him.

A few years later, when he was thirty, Wang became a monk, and a very good monk he was! He let go of all his petty worries. He achieved enlightenment and wrote several important books. When he died in 975 AD at the age of 72, Amitabha came to take him to the Pure Land.

SAVING THE DRAGON KING'S SON

Once there was an old doctor named Sun. He was very kind, especially to animals.

While he was taking a stroll outside the village one fine autumn day, he happened to see two kids who had captured a snake. They were playing with it, and the snake was so exhausted that it was almost dead. The old man couldn't bear to see even a snake die, so he got some money out of his pocket and bought the snake from them. Then he took it to the edge of the pond and let it go.

A few days later, he was sitting in his study. He dozed off. Before long, he saw a man dressed in green come in and ask Sun to go with him. Sun went, and the man took him to a very awesome palace. Everything was spick and span. Sun didn't have any idea where he was.

When Dr. Sun and his guide came into the main hall, a very important looking man came out and addressed Sun, saying, "My son was out playing. If you hadn't saved him, sir, I am afraid that my son wouldn't have gotten away with his life."

Then he had the servants serve a feast for their honored guest. After the feast, the father presented jewels and treasures to Sun, but the doctor didn't want any. The father insisted, so finally Sun said, "I have heard that in the Crystal Palace of the Dragon," for by now he had figured out where he was, "there are many extraordinary medicines which can cure all ailments and diseases which people contract. If you would be so kind as to transmit a few of your special prescriptions so that I might save suffering people, that would be an act of great merit."

The Dragon King, as the father turned out to be, immediately got out jade tablets inscribed with 36 prescriptions. He gave these to old Sun.

After he received the prescriptions, Dr. Sun returned to his study. He woke with a start. He realized it had just been a dream.

But the funny thing is that from then on, whenever he treated a patient, no matter how serious the patient's illness was, the patient was cured immediately. In this way, Sun saved many, many suffering people.

SAVING THE DRAGON KING'S SON



THE SAMI WHO RESCUED THE ANTS



THE SAMI WHO RESCUED THE ANTS

A little monk who is not old enough to get ordained is called a 'sami.'

Once there was a little sami who studied Buddhism with a very wise Teacher. He was a very good student. He was respectful, sincere, and obedient. He learned very quickly.

The Teacher was so wise that he could foretell the future. The Teacher knew from the beginning that his little student could not live very long. One day he counted and realized that the little student had only seven days left to live. He felt very sad.

The Teacher called the little sami to him. He said, "Hey, little sami, you haven't seen your mother for a long time. I think you need a vacation. You run on home and visit your mother, and come back eight days from now." He did this so at least the little sami could die in his own parents' home.

When the little sami left, the Teacher was very sorry. He thought he would never see his little student again.

Eight day later, who should show up but the little sami! His Teacher was delighted, but he was also puzzled, because the little student looked wonderful. He didn't *look* like someone who had been about to die.

Finally, the Teacher decided to find out what had happened. He told the boy, "Son, I have foretold the future many times, and I have never been wrong. I sent you home because you were doomed to die within seven days, but the seven days have already passed. Not only are you still alive, but you look great. The image of death has left you. How did you do it?"

The little sami was thunderstruck. He didn't have any idea how to answer his Teacher, so the Teacher entered the settled state of meditation. Before long, he understood.

"Son, on the way home, did you save some ants?"

"Yes, Teacher, on the way home I saw a whole bunch of ants trapped by some water. They were about to drown, so I got a piece of wood and rescued them."

"That's it, then. Your kind heart has earned you a long life. The wise men of old said, 'Saving one life earns more merit than building a pagoda of seven stories.' You have saved hundreds of lives, so you will live a very long time now.

"You have earned a good future, but you still have to keep working to save living creatures. You must spread the message of the Buddha. Teach all people to be merciful. Tell everyone not to kill living creatures. Let animals live in peace."

The little sami never forgot his Teacher's words. He worked very hard and became a great monk. He lived for a long, long time.

XVIII

THE MOTHER DEER

The forest was still in the early morning.

The rising sun lit up the earth, the forest, and the plains. The mountains glowed with a beautiful light, and the water glistened on the ripples in the stream. Everything was at peace.

Suddenly a man appeared. He hurried across the stream and reached a meadow. He stopped and looked around him, as if he were looking for something. This man had a strong face, big ears, eyebrows like swords, and eyes like a tiger's. He had an adventurer's turban on his head. He held a bow in his left hand and his quiver hung on his right hip. He looked vigorous, tough, and lively. This man was Hsu Chenchun. He loved the great outdoors, and he especially loved hunting.

He spotted a fawn coming out of the forest. Hsu smiled and nocked an arrow. Zip! The fawn fell over almost as soon as the sound of the bow-string was heard. Hsu was proud of his good shot. Just as he was about to go pick up his game, he saw the fawn's mother running to her child.

When the mother deer saw what had happened to her baby, she whimpered and cried, and licked her baby's wound with her tongue.

Hsu had never expected this to happen. He watched as the mother tended her baby, but Hsu's aim had been too accurate. The wound was too deep, and before long, the little deer died.

When the little deer died, its mother fell down dead, too.

Hsu was amazed. He couldn't figure out why the mother deer had died, too. He took out his hunting knife and cut open her corpse to find out what was wrong.

He saw that her organs and intestines were broken into little pieces an inch long! The mother deer was so sad the her baby had been killed that she burst her innards.

Hsu was terribly sorry about what he had done. Right away, he broke his bow across his knee and threw his arrows into the stream. He left his home and went deep into the mountains to find a Teacher. He worked hard for many years and finally became a great Buddhist.

THE MOTHER DEER



A DRAGON IN DISGUISE



A DRAGON IN DISGUISE

There was an old man named Ch'u. He was well over sixty. He had done many good things throughout his life. In the old days, transportation was very difficult. He donated money to have roads made and bridges built so people could get around more easily. People in need could always count on him for a hand-out. His neighbors had many good things to say about him.

One day he saw a fisherman on his way to the market to sell a carp he had caught. This beautiful fish had red markings as bright and warm as a fire in the winter. Its eyes were as shiny as stars in the sky. Old Ch'u thought it would be a shame to eat such a beautiful fish, so he bought the carp for a good price and put it in a pond. He felt very good about that.

But Ch'u was an old man, and nobody lives forever. Not long after that, he felt weak, giddy, and despondent. He thought he might not live much longer.

As he was lying home sick, a little serving boy came in, and said, "Mister Ch'u, my master has sent me to invite you to eat with him."

Old Ch'u didn't recognize whose serving boy it was, but he thought getting out of bed might do him good; a meal out would lift his spirits. He followed the boy. 'I must really be sick,' he thought as they made their way, 'Everything looks hazy, and glowing in a golden light.'

Before long, he found himself standing in front of an ornate palace with carved pillars and painted beams. A sign over the front door read, The Crystal Palace. "Strange! Isn't that the name of the dragon's palace?" wondered Old Ch'u.

In a few moments, out came his host, a most impressive man with thick eyebrows, long eyes, and five long strands of whiskers. He looked lively and powerful, yet virtuous. After they had chatted a bit, Old Ch'u found out that his host was none other than the Dragon King himself!

Together they enjoyed a rich feast of all the delicacies of mountain and sea. The Dragon King told Old Ch'u, "One of my sons was out fooling around the other day, and was kidnaped by a bandit who was going to murder him! Fortunately, you were there to save him. For this we are most grateful.

"Actually, your time on this earth is just about up, but because you have rescued a dragon in the guise of a fish, you have earned the right to live longer. I have prepared this simple repast to express my gratitude, and explain this to you."

"I hardly dare to accept your generosity," Old Ch'u humbly replied. "From now on, I will do even more good deeds to show my deep gratitude."

After their feast, Old Ch'u woke up in bed with a full stomach. "It must have been a dream," he told himself. "But why am I so full?"

He did many more good deeds, and died peacefully many years later without any suffering at the age of one hundred twenty years old.

HOW THE TENTH BECAME THE FIRST

In the old days, few people anywhere in the world could read or write. In China, parents hoped they could make a little bit more money so they could send their sons to a teacher to learn how to read and write. If they studied very, very hard and passed the Imperial Examinations, they could win posts in the government. This brought respect, glory, and power to the whole family. However, the examinations were extremely difficult. Many students took the examinations over and over until they were old men, but never passed.

One year, the brothers Sung Chiao and Sung Chi went to the capital together to take the examinations. On the way, they met a monk, who looked carefully at Sung Chiao and exclaimed, "I can tell by looking at your features that you have saved many, many lives. According to your original fortune, you should fail in the imperial examinations, but because you have saved so many lives, this year you will win the highest place in the entire empire. Let this poor monk be the first to congratulate this future official."

Sung Chiao thought this was strange. "When did I ever save many lives?"

The monk said, "Once you saved ants in distress."

"What? You mean saving some measly ants means saving lives?"

"Exactly. All living creatures have lives and fates, even a bug as lowly as an ant. Your brother was originally destined to win the top score in these examinations, but you will not do worse than he."

The Sung brothers could hardly believe this. As they walked away, Chi asked Chiao, "Did you really save a bunch of ants?"

Yes," his brother answered, "Once I saw some ants about to get drowned, so I made a little bridge out of a piece of bamboo and they got away."

The imperial examinations were more important to them than any ants or monk's predictions, and they forgot all about it as they made their way to the capital and did their last minute cramming.

When all of the test papers had been graded, the results were announced to the Emperor. Sung Chi had won the highest score in the entire empire. Sung Chiao was in tenth place -- of course this was also a very high score. The Emperor examined the list of the highest scores.

"This will not do," the Emperor said, "Sung Chi has won first place, ranking higher than his elder brother Sung Chiao. It is not natural for the younger brother to be exalted above the elder brother. Switch Sung Chiao to the first place, and rank Sung Chi tenth."

The Emperor's command was carried out. When the brothers heard about the switch, they remembered what the monk had said, and burst out laughing. On their way home to tell their parents the wonderful news about the examination, they made a special trip to give their thanks to the old monk, and compliment him on his wisdom.

Before long, the story spread all over China, and everyone knew about the brother who ants boosted to first place.

HOW THE TENTH BECAME THE FIRST



BURIAL BY BIRDS



BURIAL BY BIRDS

A lonely man lived by himself in a little hut.

His name was Sun Liang. He was dirt poor, but he was honest and kind. He did odd jobs. His pay was very low. Whenever he saw an animal in a trap, if he had any money, he would buy the animal and set it free in the forest.

In this way, he saved many animals, but he didn't save any money, so he was still very poor.

When he was too old to work, he had to beg for food to stay alive. One day when he was over seventy years old, he was too weak to get up from his bed, and before long, he left this world.

Sun Liang had no relative and no friends. He was so poor that he didn't even have enough money for a coffin, and for Chinese people, the worst possible fate is to die and not get buried. But there was nobody to look after him. His neighbors were almost as poor as he was. They didn't know he was dead, and even if they had, they certainly didn't have enough money to buy him a coffin and bury him.

The morning after Sun Liang died, the neighbors were amazed to see the sky full of birds. Thousands of birds came from all directions and flew into Sun Liang's hut. The neighbors came to see what was wrong. They saw Sun lying dead on his bed. They thought the birds must have come to peck the flesh off his bones.

Then they saw that every bird brought a little soil in its beak, and dropped the soil on Sun's body. They had come to show their gratitude by burying their savior!

Thousands and thousands of birds came. They flew back and forth. Before noon, they had filled his whole hut with soil and turned it into a tomb for Sun Liang.

The neighbors were deeply touched when they saw this. From then on, they never caught another animal in a trap or a net.

GENERAL MAO AND THE TURTLE

During the Chin dynasty about 1,600 years ago, there was a kind-hearted Confucian scholar named Mao Pao. Once, before he had passed the imperial examinations and become a government official, he happened to see a fisherman on his way to the market to sell a turtle he had caught. Mao Pao immediately bought the turtle, but instead of eating it, he took it to a nearby lake and let it go.

Later, Mao Pao became a very powerful general. Even the best generals lose sometimes, though, and at Chuch'eng, General Mao's forces were beaten by Shih Chilung, and they had to run for their lives.

The enemy was following hot on their heels. General Mao was running as fast as anyone else. He reached a lake, but there were no boats around, and there was no bridge. There was no way to cross the water. General Mao couldn't swim, and anyway, he was dressed in battle armor, which would carry him straight to the bottom.

He looked back and saw the enemy was almost on top of him. He sighed and said, "The heavens have abandoned me!"

Rather than fall into enemy hands, General Mao prepared to take his own life. Just as he was about to commit suicide, he noticed something huge come to the surface of the water, and float over close to the shore where he was preparing to kill himself.

He had no time to worry about what was floating in the lake. The enemy was coming closer and closer. General Mao decided, "If I kill myself here, the enemy will capture my corpse, which will disgrace my country and my emperor. It will be better for me to throw myself into the lake so they cannot find my corpse." With that, he leaped into the water of the lake.

But to his surprise, he landed on something. Then he started to move away from the shore, across the lake, to the other side. General Mao was astonished.

The enemy reached the lake. They shrieked and howled and shot arrows at General Mao, but he was already out of range. The arrows fell into the water and didn't hit him.

General Mao looked down and discovered he was standing on a huge turtle! The turtle took him to the other side of the lake. General Mao got off and climbed up the bank. The turtle came to the surface and nodded to him. Then it sank back into the water and swam away.

Then General Mao remembered that dozens of years before, he had saved a turtle and released it in a lake -- this very lake!

Now, in his time of need, the turtle had come to rescue him: a life for a life!

GENERAL MAO AND THE TURTLE



BEEES PREVENT A MISCARRIAGE OF JUSTICE



BEES PREVENT A MISCARRIAGE OF JUSTICE

One day a bartender in a tavern happened to see that there was a bee drowning in one of his kegs of liquor. He felt sorry for the little bee, so he lowered a chopstick to the bee for it to climb out on. He put the chopstick down, and watched as the bee dried out. It flapped its wings so they would dry out faster. When it was all dry again, it flew away buzzing busily.

After that, the bartender noticed that quite a few bees were attracted by the smell of the liquor, fell in, and drowned. From then on, he kept an eye out for them, and rescued many bees.

This went on for many years. One day, he was startled when bailiffs from the court marched into his tavern and, without a word of explanation, handcuffed him and marched him off to the court. When he got there, he discovered that he had been framed. Some captured bandits who held a grudge against him said that the bartender was one of their gang, so the judge in charge of the case had him hauled in to behead him with the rest of them.

The bartender protested that he was innocent, but the bandits had already said he was guilty, so the authorities assumed he was guilty. The bartender's heart went cold as he saw the main judge pick up the red brush used for writing out the death sentence.

Just as the main judge picked up his brush to write, a loud buzzing was heard coming closer, getting louder and louder. A great swarm of bees came flying in the window and landed on the judge's red brush! The judge waved the brush to shake them off, but more and more bees came. They didn't sting, but they wouldn't go away, either.

The judge thought this most extraordinary. "Perhaps," he mused, "These bees are here to prevent a miscarriage of justice."

At that, the main judge examined the bandits again, and found contradictions in their testimony. He grilled them over again. This time he was sure that he had almost executed an innocent man.

Only when the judge called off the bartender's death sentence did the swarms of bees fly away. Then the judge asked the bartender if he knew why the bees had come to save him.

"I really don't know either, your honor, but maybe it's because I have saved lots of bees that almost drowned in my vats of liquor. They come to the smell, you know, and then they fall in and can't get out. When I see that, I always save them. Now they've come to save me, I guess, your honor."

"This is truly wonderful! You have had a narrow escape. Always remember that you owe your life to your good deeds. Remember to do all the good deeds you can. You are sure to enjoy good fortune in the future."

The judge's words proved true. The bartender kept doing all the good deeds he could. His business got better year after year. He lived a long, happy life, and died peacefully, a very rich man.

LONG LIFE, HAPPINESS, AND HONOR

Chang was a minor official in the county government. He was upright and righteous. He had a kind heart and did merciful deeds. Even though his post didn't pay much, he often went to the butcher's shops and bought animals bound for the slaughter. He took them home and raised them.

He had lots of children and grandchildren, which for Chinese people is the best luck possible. He never wasted any money, so as the years went by, he saved quite a bit of money. Whenever he could, he bought doomed animals from the butchers and took them home to raise. When these animals died of old age, he always buried them carefully.

Chang grew old, too, and retired. He spent his old age taking care of his children, his grandchildren, and his animals. The neighbors thought he was nuts, but he didn't mind. He taught his children to respect all life. He never let them kill any animal. The whole family was vegetarian.

Because he was a vegetarian and had saved many lives, when he was very old, Chang was still as healthy and lively as a person much younger.

When he was over one hundred years old, he was still radiantly healthy. His eyes were clear. His skin was bright. His hair was black and shiny. One day he called the whole family together. When his children and grandchildren and great-grandchildren and great-great-grandchildren had all gathered before him, he told them, "During my lifetime, I have saved many animals, so I have accumulated much merit for you. Today the Palace of Heaven has sent for me. In the future, the Chang family will prosper. You will all live long lives. After I leave you, always remember my teaching: never kill any living creature."

When he finished, the whole family heard music that seemed to be coming down from heaven. They had never heard such beautiful music. It sounded so glorious that it must not have come from this earth, but it seemed to be coming closer.

All of Chang's children and grandchildren and great-grandchildren and great-great-grandchildren looked up to see where the music was coming from, but they didn't see anything. When they looked down again, Chang was sitting in his favorite chair, looking happy, but he was not breathing anymore. He had died peacefully, without any illness.

Local officials heard this amazing story. When they had authenticated it, they reported to the Emperor, who honored Chang's spirit by promoting him to a higher rank.

Chang's descendants never forgot his teaching. They lived long, happy lives, and never killed a living creature or ate a bite of meat.

LONG LIFE, HAPPINESS, AND HONOR



RELEASING TRAPPED RABBITS



RELEASING TRAPPED RABBITS

The great monk Huineng lived from 638 to 713 AD. His family was so poor that he never had the chance to go to school to learn to read or write. He had very deep natural wisdom, though, and as soon as he found out about Buddhism, he made up his mind to become a monk. He worked very hard and soon achieved enlightenment. His Teacher, the Fifth Patriarch, or Master, of the Ch'an school, passed to him the robe and bowl which the First Patriarch, Bodhidharma, had brought from India. Huineng became the Sixth Patriarch of the Ch'an school, which the Japanese call Zen.

When he achieved enlightenment, he realized the trouble people cause themselves by killing animals for food. He told people to stop eating themselves into disaster, but nobody listened.

Huineng felt sorry for the hunters who kill wild animals, so he took off his robes and let his hair grow so he didn't look like a monk anymore. He joined a group of hunters who spent months and months hunting in the wilds and the mountains.

Huineng wouldn't shoot or trap, so the hunters told him to watch the nets. That was just what he wanted. When he saw a deer or rabbit tangled in the nets, if the hunters were not around, he freed the animals. If the hunters were there, Huineng cried and begged them to release the animals.

He stayed with the hunters for sixteen years. In this way he not only saved many animals, but reformed the hunters as well. They realized the cruelty of their occupation, and found other ways to make a living.

Then Huineng set up his own temple. He was so kind and so wise that people came from miles around to learn from him, and to become Buddhists. His disciples passed his Ch'an, or Zen, teaching to Korea and Japan, and now it has spread to Europe and America, too.

DEAD BODIES ARE TO BE BURIED

Long, long ago in Hsuanch'eng lived Yu Penshu, who never ever ate beef.

One day Yu Penshu got sick. His doctor prescribed medicine to be taken with cow brain. When his friends heard about this, they gave Yu beef and cow brains for his medicine. Yu gave the brain to his servants to eat and took the medicine. He thought that this way he was not guilty of any crime against living creatures.

One night he dreamed that a god dressed in splendid clothes scolded him, saying "You must eat beef. If you didn't, you wouldn't smell so foul."

Yu defended himself. "That's not true! I never eat beef!"

The god had his attendant get out the official records and look up Yu's case. "You have not eaten any beef yourself, but because of your sickness you have broken universal commandments. Then you have given the dead body to your servants to eat. For this your life should be shortened.

"However, you have a clean record, and display sincere regret. If you take part in no more killing, and advise others not to eat beef, you will be pardoned for the time being."

Yu asked,

"What should I do if someone gives me beef?"

The god smiled. "Certainly you should know that dead bodies should be buried with proper respect. You can do many good deeds if you set your heart to it, and stick to it."

When Yu Penshu woke up, he knew it had been a dream, but what the god told him was so important, he wrote it down for everybody to read. Living creatures are not to be killed. Even if someone makes you a present of a piece of meat, remember that it is a dead body, and dead bodies are to be buried.

DEAD BODIES ARE TO BE BURIED



THE GOAT'S TONGUE



THE GOAT'S TONGUE

The T'ang dynasty from 618 to 907 AD was one of the great eras of Chinese history. In the capital lived one P'an Kuo, whose skill as a martial artist earned him a post in the government offices when he was still very young. He was easy to get along with, so he made many friends among the other young men working there.

One day, a group of them was walking along by a cemetery. Among the tombs, P'an spotted a goat that a shepherd had forgotten. The goat was minding its own business, eating the grass. P'an and his friends surrounded it and dragged it off towards home. The goat started bleating. They were afraid the shepherd would hear and come after his goat, so P'an reached in and pulled out the goat's tongue by the roots. He was proud of his quick wits.

After they got home, they slaughtered the goat and roasted it. They washed it down with a lot of wine and had a good time.

In the following year, P'an was horrified to discover his tongue shrinking. As it got shorter and shorter, P'an lost his speech. He couldn't carry out his official duties, so he quit his job. He had to find some way to cure his tongue.

His boss, Cheng Yuch'ing, suspected P'an was just being lazy, so he ordered him to open his mouth to prove whether or not he was really sick. He was surprised to see that P'an's tongue had already disappeared. All that was left was a little stub at the root. He demanded to know what had happened. P'an took up a brush and wrote, "It must be because a bunch of us were stealing a goat last year, and when the goat started bleating, I ripped its tongue out."

Cheng Yuch'ing knew that P'an lost his tongue to balance the tongue he took from the goat. He ordered his subordinates to carry out Buddhist services to bring the goat fortune to compensate for its loss. He told P'an to copy the Lotus Sutra.

P'an was sorry for what he had done. He swore never again to eat the flesh of an animal, and to do his best to bring the goat fortune through good deeds, dharma services, and prayers.

After a year, his tongue began to grow back.

When he found his tongue was growing back, P'an was thrilled. He ran to the office to report to Cheng. Cheng was proud of P'an for his determination to correct his mistake. When he could speak normally again, he promoted him. Cheng Yuch'ing was so honest and wise that people always praised him. The word of his good deeds reached the Emperor T'ai Tsung, one of the best emperors in Chinese history, and in the 9th year of his reign, 635 AD, Cheng Yuch'ing was promoted to the post of Imperial Censor, one of the highest positions in the Empire.

Cheng told the Emperor that perhaps he won his promotion to balance the fortune he had won for the goat that lost its tongue.

XXVIII

THE RESULTS OF CRUELTY

During the T'ang dynasty there was a very cruel farmer.

At noon one day he went to see how everything was in his fields. He saw that the bull a neighbor used to plow had wandered into his field. It was eating the grains and had trampled his crops.

The farmer was furious. "I have worked so hard to grow these crops, and now you have come to steal some and trample the rest! You must be tired of living!" With that, he took out his knife and said, "I am not going to kill you, but since you have eaten my crops, you have to leave your tongue here. Let's see if you ever dare steal from me again!"

The bull must have known it had done wrong, because it dropped its head and looked sorry. The mean farmer grabbed it by the horn and cut out its tongue. Even though it hurt, the bull did not cry out in pain.

Later, that cruel farmer got married and had three children. Each one of his children lost the ability to speak about half a year after it had begun to talk. The farmer did not understand why his children were mute. He took his children to see many famous doctors, but none of the medicine they prescribed could make them speak again.

Then the farmer remembered the tongue he had cut out of the bull's mouth a dozen years before. He knew what was wrong with his children. His cruelty was reflected back into his family.

THE RESULTS OF CRUELTY





DOCTOR TURTLE

There was an uproar in the kitchen. "Grab it! Stick it back in the wok!"

When Huang Tehuan heard the noise, he thought something must be wrong, so he ran in to see. He saw a turtle crawling along the floor. It looked pitiful. Huang asked the cooks why they were making such a fuss about one little turtle.

"We were cooking this turtle for you, sir. We lifted the lid of the wok to see if it was done, and it held the lid and climbed out. Its back has been scalded, and it can just move its head and legs. It scared us."

Huang Tehuan told the cooks to take the turtle to a river and let it go. He made up his mind never to torture another animal for food. He became a vegetarian right then and there.

Years later, Huang had a very bad fever. His family took him to the river bank where the cool breezes might make him feel more comfortable.

One night he felt something climb up onto his body. He immediately felt cool all over, and felt very happy.

When the sun came up, he felt a bit cold. His chest felt much better. He looked down and saw that his chest was covered with mud. There was a turtle sitting by his bed. When it saw Huang was awake, the turtle nodded to him three times and crawled out of his room.

That day, Huang got out of his bed. His fever was gone. Then his family told him how close he had been to death. The doctor said that if the turtle hadn't come to cool him down, he would have died.

Huang told his family how important it was not to kill animals. He eventually lived to the ripe old age of 80, and finally died peacefully without any illness or pain.

THE CHICKENS THAT FOUGHT OFF A TIGER

Sometimes Chinese do not call a person by his name, but by his number in the family. In Ch'uchou there was a minor official everyone called Fang 3, because he was his parents' third son.

Fang 3 was a nice man. Everyone liked him. One day he went to the Hou farm to collect taxes.

"Brother Hou, I have to ask you to pay this year's taxes. I know nobody likes to pay tax, but I have to report to my boss."

Hou 2 very politely said, "Fang 3, you must know that this year's harvest was terrible. We simply don't have anything to pay you with. Could you possibly give us ten days or half a month? Maybe we can gather some firewood to sell and get some money to pay our taxes to the Emperor."

Fang 3 paused to consider. Hou 2 told his wife to prepare a meal for their guest. Just as Mrs. Hou walked out the door with the butcher knife, Fang caught a glimpse of a woman in brown standing outside the door begging him to be kind. Just then he heard a hen clucking. He knew that hen was brown. He told Hou, "I've already eaten. You don't have to cook anything for me." So Mrs. Hou put down her knife, and the hen was spared.

When Fang came back a few weeks later for the tax money, that brown hen was waiting respectfully outside the gate for him. She had her little chicks lined up and they all seemed happy to see him.

Fang got the tax money and left. As he crossed the stream by Hou's farm and climbed the hill on the far side, a tiger came rushing out of the forest and pounced at him. Fang 3 was petrified. He shut his eyes and prepared to be eaten.

Then he heard a strange sound, and saw the hen and her chicks attacking the tiger! But how could some chickens possibly fight off a tiger? They flew at its eyes and pecked and pecked. The tiger howled and ran away.

Fang 3 fainted like a dead man. When he came to, he went back to the Hou farm and bought the hen and her brood for a high price. He carried them home and took good care of them forever after.

THE CHICKENS THAT FOUGHT OFF A TIGER





MERCY BEGINS AT THE DINNER TABLE

During the Ming dynasty, a Buddhist called Wang Ch'eng was always willing to help others, especially orphans and the poor.

Every day Wang chanted Buddhist sutras, or scripture. In general, he was very pious, but for some reason, there was one rule of Buddhism he did not obey: he was not a vegetarian.

He lived during a bad period. There were many disasters. Bandits and outlaws roamed the country. Wang was worried. He heard that a monk living in a cave practiced Buddhism so hard that he could tell the past and the future. He knew the causes of present conditions and the effects the future would bring. Wang decided to visit him for instruction, even though the way was long and dangerous.

Finally, after many difficulties, Wang reached the monk's cave. He addressed the monk. "Your heavenly honor, the world today is full of bandits and outlaws. The people are oppressed by those bearing weapons. We do not know how to keep living. We living creatures are drowning in a sea of disasters. We call upon you, sir, to show mercy by giving us a hand and helping us survive."

The monk smiled. "You are Wang Ch'eng, aren't you?"

Wang was startled. "Yes, sir, but how could you know my name? What is your honor's instruction?"

"If you cannot be a vegetarian, you're just wasting our time with these questions."

Wang continued asking questions, but the monk had no more to say to him, so Wang had to go home and think over what he had learned. He decided that he really did have to stop eating the carcasses of dead animals.

Several years later, Wang presented himself at the cave again. When the monk saw him, he laughed. "That's more like it! You have understood, and you have finally taken the teachings of mercy to heart.

"We live in treacherous times. The country is full of bandits. Only those who do not kill may live in peace. This is the balance of the universe."

With that, the monk closed his eyes and continued his meditation.

Wang Ch'eng returned home to tell everybody that nobody who kills any living creature can hope for peace, because killing causes killing. If you eat meat, you are responsible for many deaths, so even if you do good deeds, you cannot enjoy true peace. To enjoy peace, you have to earn it by creating peace, not suffering. The best way to do that is to respect all life and eat only vegetarian food.

AN IDEAL BIRTHDAY PARTY

Granny Hsu was the mother of the imperial scholar Hsiyu. They lived in Kunlun, near Shanghai, during the Ming dynasty.

Granny Hsu was a lifelong vegetarian. She enjoyed doing good deeds. She did all she could to help the poor. Every morning and evening she practiced her Buddhist devotions, and she never missed a day.

She was kind to her children, and her children were very good to her, so they had a happy family.

In 1637, Granny Hsu celebrated her sixtieth birthday. The sixtieth birthday is important for Chinese, but she didn't celebrate with a cake and candles. Three days before her birthday, she had her children prepare food and money for all the poor people in the area.

When the big day came, the poor people crowded around her house and everybody had a great time. Of course, the feast was all vegetarian dishes, and were they delicious! Everybody was stuffed.

Granny Hsu's friends and relatives all came, too, but Chinese don't give presents at birthdays, they give money. Granny Hsu got a whole pile of money for her birthday. She called Yuhsi to her. "Take this pile of money and print the Lotus Sutra for these friends and relatives."

In those days, printing was very difficult, and books were hard to come by. Most books were printed by carving the text on boards, word by word, page by page. The Lotus Sutra is pretty long, so it took three years to finish.

The Sutra was ready just in time for her 63rd birthday, so she invited all her friends and relatives to another birthday party, and this time, she gave every one of them a copy of the Lotus Sutra.

Granny Hsu lived for a long time. She was still lively and healthy at eighty, and she always had a good appetite. Everybody said she didn't look a day over sixty. Her children and grandchildren said they were so happy and prosperous because they were all vegetarians, and Granny Hsu had done so many good deeds. She lived to be over ninety years old, and died cheerfully, without any sickness.

AN IDEAL BIRTHDAY PARTY





FATE CAN BE CHANGED

Yuan Liuchuang was an expert fortune-teller. He could tell a person's fate from the lines on his palm or the shape of her nose. Once a very powerful government official brought his son to Yuan to have his fortune told. Yuan knew immediately that a few years later, the little boy would die. He told the official.

Of course the official was heart-broken. On his way home, he ran into a monk, who asked, "Why do you look so sad?" The official explained that he had just had bad news from a fortune-teller. The monk examined the little boy and looked into his fate. He told the boy's father, "The only way to save your little boy is through hidden virtue, but there not always chances to do good. If you wish to build hidden virtue, the most convenient way is through releasing animals. That way you can build hidden virtue, which will protect your son."

Right away, the official made up his mind never to kill again and to release trapped animals. He worked hard for several years, but when he saw the monk again, the monk said, "Not enough! You have not created enough good karma, so you still can't save your son."

The father worked even harder to save animals. Whenever there was an opportunity to do something for others, man or beast, he was the first to donate time and money. In this way, he saved innumerable lives, and when his son reached the year in which he was fated to die, he lived and grew into a fine young man.

Yuan Liuchuang heard about this. From then on, whenever he saw that someone's fortune was bad, he told that person to do good and to save lives. In this way, many people who should have died miserably lived long lives, and many people who should have been poor became rich instead.

SAVING LIVES FOR A LONGER LIFE

T'u Ch'inyang, the County Chief of Ch'ient'ang in Chekiang became very sick, and his doctor gave him the wrong medicine by accident, which almost finished him off.

T'u realized how precious, but how fragile, life is. He made a vow. "I swear that I will devote my life to helping others and saving the world. The most important duty is to repent and to save all in the world. Nothing else is worth bothering about."

One day, Kuanyin, the merciful deliverer, came to him in a dream, and said, "In your past life, you were an official in Ch'u. Although you were honest, you were too strict, so you caused great harm to others, which could have been avoided. You were not selfish or greedy, but your actions have caused you to lose your rank. Also, you ate many animals, so of course the result is that your life should be shortened.

"Fortunately, this sickness has awakened your conscience and you have sworn a very good oath. You have made up your mind to help others, and have no wrath in your heart. This is very good. If you want to live longer, the greatest hidden virtue of all is to save lives. Release animals trapped in cages or raised for the slaughter. This will also earn you higher rank.

"Take care. Do a good job."

After he woke up, T'u told his family never to kill another animal. He began donating money to free doomed animals.

Sure enough, that winter he was promoted to take charge of Chiochiang county, and the next spring, his illness was cured entirely. T'u was very grateful to Kuanyin and the Buddhas. He always remembered his vow to help others. The best way to do that is to tell them not to kill, but to release living creatures.

T'u was always honest, and carried out his duties carefully. He lived a long life and died at home of old age.



THE CHILDLESS RICH MAN



THE CHILDLESS RICH MAN

During the Yuan dynasty (1279-1368), when the Mongols under Genghis Khan had conquered China, there was a rich man who had a lot of money but no children. He and his wife were very lonely. They wanted a son, but just couldn't have one.

The rich man always moped about that. "What good does all my money do without any kids to share it with?"

"Why don't you go to the temple and ask the monk there?" a friend suggested. "He can see the past and the future. If anybody can help you, he can."

So the rich man and his wife went to the temple. They paid their respects to the Buddhas. When they saw the monk, they fell on their knees and knocked their foreheads on the floor.

"Teacher, Teacher, we beg you, tell us what is wrong. We want a child more than anything else, but we just can't have one."

The monk cast their fortunes, and used his powers to look into the past and the future. Then he told the rich man,

"You ran up a huge debt in your past life by killing animals. You killed the children of many animals, so in this life, you don't get any children of your own."

"This debt is very heavy, and it's not enough just to pay it back. You have to be sorry and repent. If you can save eight million lives, you can balance out your debt. If you kill one more bug or one more worm, even by accident, you have to save one hundred more lives to make up for it."

"This is the best way to change your luck and to get a son."

The rich man was deeply touched. He went to the main shrine of the temple and swore before the Buddhas that he would never kill again. When he and his wife got home, they got to work saving lives, and spent most of their fortune on it. They bought pigs, chickens, and ducks from the market, and arranged for them to live out their natural life spans in temples. They bought fish and crabs and eels and put them back in the water. They were very pious and went to many services in temples, to repent their past mistakes.

They kept it up for several years. Long before they had saved eight million lives, they had a healthy, happy little boy.

Their son was so intelligent that when he grew up, he passed the imperial examinations with ease the very first time.

LIFE IS PRECIOUS

Long ago, a man called Wang Talin lived in Suchow. All life was precious to him. He bought animals and released them from their cages.

Whenever kids in his village had caught fish or birds or even bugs, he paid them to let these animals go. He told them, "It's not good to kill. Don't you see how happy the birds are in the forest? When you catch them, just think how worried their parents are! Look how happy the fish are in the water. They swim back and forth. They are beautiful to watch. Why do you have to catch them and put them to death? You really shouldn't kill!"

These kids would go home and tell their parents what Wang had told them. Their parents would see the point, too.

Then Wang got sick. He had an incurable disease. The doctors told his family to dig his grave. Just as he was dying, he seemed to hear a god talking to him. He didn't dare to believe his ears!

The god told him, "Wang Talin, it is time for you to die. But you have saved many lives, so you have saved your own life, too. You will not die now."

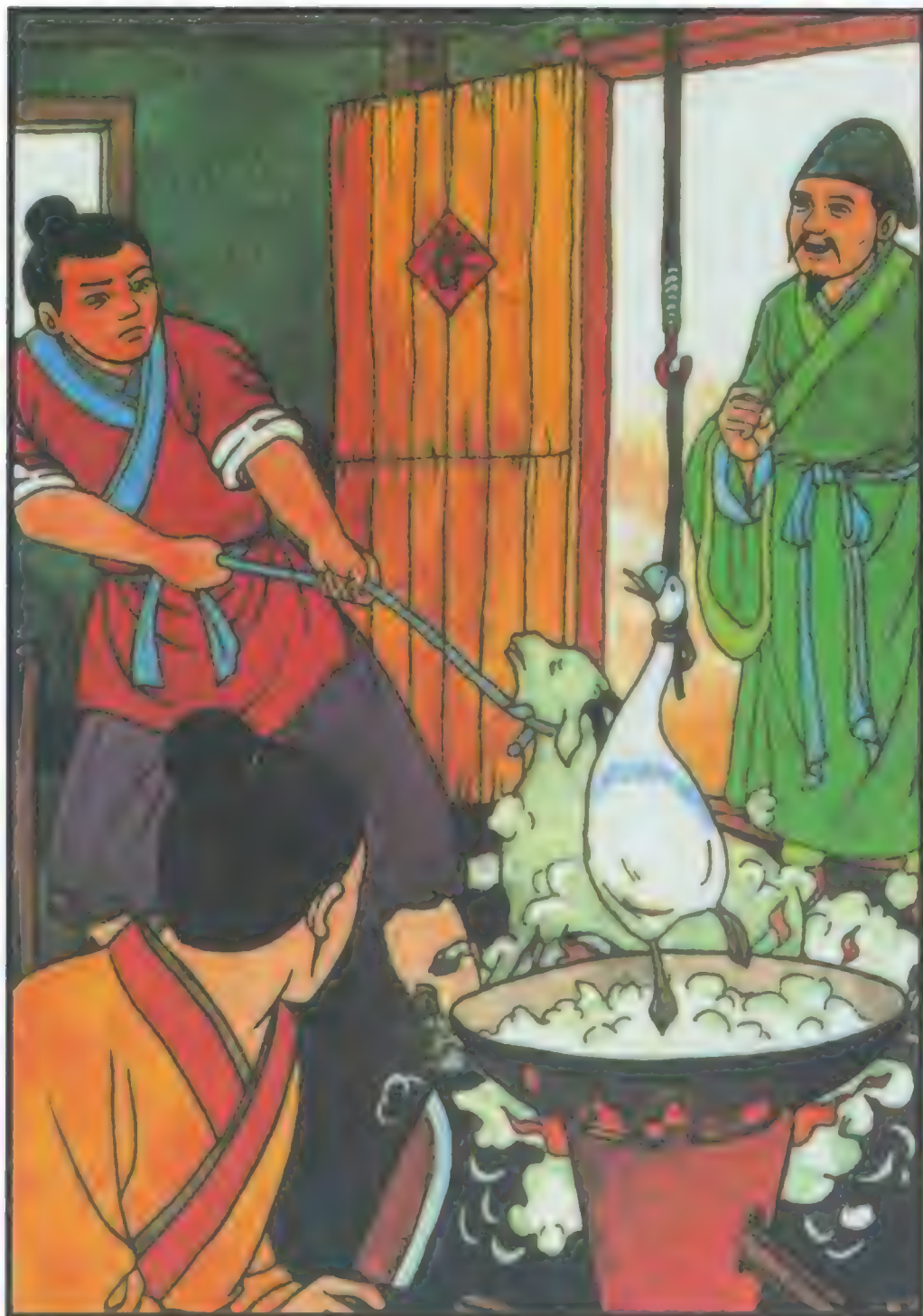
Wang opened his eyes. "I'm not dead yet!" he told his family. He got out of bed. His disease was gone!

Wang did not die then. He lived to be 97 years old. His children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, and great-great-grandchildren all lived together with him in one big, happy family.

Wang was so lucky because he had a kind heart and believed that all life is precious.



A BAD STORY



A BAD STORY

Now we have to tell you a bad story.

Long ago, there was a government official whose favorite dishes were geese's feet and live goat's heart. When he wanted to eat a goose's feet, he had the goose hung above an iron wok with a fire under it. When the fire heated the wok, the goose would twist and cry, but the official didn't care. The heat of the fire would make the goose's feet swell up, and the blood would run into its feet as the goose was cooked to death. What a cruel way to prepare a dish!

Then the official would have a goat tied to a stake. The cooks would skin its ribs and reach in to pluck out its heart and liver. They cooked these and served them with liquor. The poor goat would bleat in pain until it died.

The official killed many geese and goats in this brutal way.

One day, a man who looked like a scholar advised the official to change his ways and stop killing innocent animals. The official didn't take his advice. Instead, he yelled at him and called him bad names.

"Then you're going to die of boils." The scholar said that and left.

The official yelled more insults after him, but sure enough, before long, he got boils all over his body. Every day he lived in pain. Many famous doctors treated him, but nobody could cure his boils. He died soon, and his body smelled so bad nobody could come near him.

A TERRIBLE DEATH

In 1732 in K'uihsing, there was an unemployed trapper named Wei who had a gun. He caught hundreds of birds and either sold them or ate them himself with liquor.

Wei also liked to dig out eels, catch frogs, and trap turtles. Sometimes he even poisoned ponds and dragged out heaps of dead fish. He overturned nests and took away birds' eggs.

His friends told him, "Old Wei, you should stop killing animals. You ought to do some farming or get a decent job."

Old Wei never took their advice. Instead, he told them to mind their own business.

Over the years, Old Wei ran up an enormous blood debt. He ended up with boils all over his body. Some of the boils were as large as pigeon eggs, and every boil had a hard piece in it the size of a shotgun pellet. Old Wei's whole body was a mass of pus. It was so painful that when he screamed, he sounded like a soul suffering in hell.

After a few days of torment, Old Wei died. His family got a coffin. While they were preparing for the funeral, they heard a strange sound. They looked out and saw hundreds and hundreds of animals rushing towards their house! They were astonished. They watched in amazement as flocks of birds, goats, turtles, and frogs rushed into the house. Before they had time to react, all of those animals attacked Old Wei's corpse. They nipped and bit. They clawed and gashed. They chewed and tugged. Some kicked the corpse. Others butted it. It was an incredible, gruesome scene.

His family knew that this was the result of his bad deeds. In moments, nothing was left of Old Wei but bare bones.

A TERRIBLE DEATH



A DREADFUL BIRTHDAY FEAST



A DREADFUL BIRTHDAY FEAST

There was an official who swore never to kill any living creature, but his wife had a nasty temper and a greedy mouth. Every day she killed some animal to make a tasty dish. Her husband never ate any of those dead animals.

One year she was having a big feast prepared for her birthday. There were pigs, goats, chickens, and ducks, all crying sadly, because they knew they were going to die.

When the official saw this, he felt very sorry. He told his wife, "Tomorrow is your birthday, but all these animals are about to die. You should feel sorry for them, and do a good deed."

That made her mad. She said, "You mean we should all be Buddhists and swear off killing? If everybody did that, in a few years, there would be animals all over the place. I'm not going to buy that!"

The next day, she was happily waiting for her feast to begin. When the first pig was hauled out and stabbed, her spirit went into its body and she felt the knife going in and ripping her apart!

Then a goat was killed, and she could feel how the goat felt as it was butchered. Then it was a chicken's turn, and her spirit went into the chicken's body and she felt her neck being wrung. She never knew anything could hurt so much! Every time an animal was killed, she felt all its pain. She knew she had done wrong. She told the cooks to stop killing those animals, to let them loose.

From then on, she never took another life or ate another mouthful of animal flesh. She told everybody how much animals suffer when they are being butchered, and how unfair it is to kill dumb beasts for food.

Because of her good deeds and mercy, she lived a long life.

THE SOUL-COLLECTOR VISITS

Chao passed the imperial examinations and earned the rank of Excellent Talent. A kind, honest man, he was careful not to hurt any living creature.

One day he went to visit some relatives. When the ferry he was on reached the middle of the river they were crossing, he noticed somebody standing in the boat. Strange, that looked like a servant of his who had died three years before!

"What are you doing?" Chao asked him.

"I am working for the world of spirits. My job is to collect souls when their time has come," the dead servant replied. "Today I have three souls to collect."

"Whose?" Chao asked.

"One of them lives over on that bank, the second is one of the relatives you're visiting, and the third, the third..."

"Who is the third soul?" Chao asked, but his dead servant wouldn't answer. Chao knew that the third soul whose time had come was himself.

His dead servant told him not to be afraid. "This evening I won't go to your place, so everything will be all right."

"How so?"

"On my way here, I was asked to let you go, because you have been so kind and you haven't killed anything."

When Chao got to his relative's house, he heard the sounds of mourning and weeping. Somebody had died. He turned around and went home. That night, his servant did not come for him. Everything was all right.

Chao lived a long and useful life. He was happy and prosperous because he never killed anything. If you cherish life, you can cherish your own life.

THE SOUL-COLLECTOR VISITS



KILLING A SNAKE



KILLING A SNAKE

A farmer who lived south of Chiangshan, Chekiang thought it was fun to kill things. He was married, but even though he was already over forty years old, he had only one child, a little boy, nine years old when our story takes place.

One day in May, 1868, this mean farmer took his hoe out to his field as usual, but on the way, he spotted a huge snake. When the snake saw the farmer, it looked at him with a pleading expression and stuck out its tongue. It seemed to be afraid, and begging for mercy.

"I'm going to kill you, no doubt about it," the farmer said. The snake started to escape, but as quick as a wink, the farmer chopped it in two with his hoe.

When the snake stopped moving, the farmer put his hoe on his shoulder and went his way with a cheerful song.

That evening, his son dreamed that a huge snake bit him. He was so frightened that he woke up. He had a fever and chills. He kept muttering, "It hurts! It hurts so much!"

His father didn't know what to do when he saw that. He was just about to go run for a doctor when his son stuck out his tongue -- but it was so long! It didn't look like a little boy's tongue at all. It looked just like a snake's tongue!

"My son! My son!" his father called, but it was too late. In a few moments, his son was dead.

EELS TAKE REVENGE

Kuichow is one of the least developed areas of China. It is a mountainous province in the southwest. A man there named Lu liked eels so much that he couldn't eat a meal without some.

If anybody asked him why he ate so many eels, he always answered, "They taste so delicious!"

One day when he was sixty, he went to the market to buy some nice fat eels.

A peddler called, "Want to buy fish? Fresh fish, live and fat, right here!"

"Have you got eels?" Lu asked.

"Right here, in this urn," the peddler replied, so Lu rolled up his sleeve and stuck his arm into the urn to choose a plump eel. He had so much experience that he could choose a delicious eel this way, just by feeling. He didn't even have to look.

Things were different this day. When he stuck in his arm, his face suddenly lost all its color and he let out a bellow like a wounded bull. Everybody looked at him, and saw that all the eels in the urn had attacked Lu's arm, and were biting him as hard as they could.

Nobody knew what to do. They couldn't get the eels off Lu's arm. Somebody ran to Lu's house, and his children came to the rescue with sharp shears. They cut the eels in half, but the heads stayed on Lu's arm, with their teeth buried in his flesh. By the time they had pried all of the eels' heads off, all the flesh was gone from Lu's arm, and he had died of the pain.

EELS TAKE REVENGE





POISON WANG LOST HIS TONGUE

Wang was his name, Poison was his nickname. He lived in Henglin outside Ch'angchou, Chiangsu. Near Henglin were several acres of reeds. A lot of sparrows lived there. Poison Wang raised a vicious eagle, and trained it very carefully. When he was ready, he made a very big net. He took it to the reed patch. He loosed his eagle, which flew back and forth above the reeds. When the sparrows saw their natural enemy, they flew back and forth in panic, and a lot of them blundered into Poison's net. Of course you can't keep a trapped sparrow long. It will commit suicide by biting off its own tongue rather than live in a cage. But Poison Wang didn't want to raise them in a cage. He crushed their heads with a big rock. Then he took their bodies to the market to sell as meat. This is how he made his living. He was very proud of this trick.

But why was his nickname Poison? Because he was vicious and cruel. He always wanted to have his own way. He never listened to reason. If anybody accidentally touched his sparrow net, Poison Wang would curse him with all the terrible, nasty names and words he could think of. He would keep cursing that person all day long. So everybody around knew him, and they detested him, too.

He finally came down with some strange disease that the doctors had never seen. His whole body ached. He rolled this way and that on his bed. He groaned and moaned and begged the doctors to help, but they couldn't figure out how to cure him. His high-handed old bullying ways were gone. His face was pinched from pain. Whenever anyone came, he whimpered and whined, saying, "Have mercy on me! Help me, please!" But nobody knew what to do. His neighbors said he looked and sounded just like a trapped sparrow begging for its life.

After several days, Poison Wang was in such agony that he chewed off his own tongue and died. He died a horrible death because he had lived a horrible life.

SWEEPING SNAILS

In 1567, Han Shihngeng of Ch'angchou, Chiangsu dreamed that a god in shining golden armor told him, "Congratulations! I bear good news. You will be promoted to the highest rank in the government."

Even though he was dreaming, Han couldn't believe it. "Why is that?" he asked the god.

"It's like this," the god said. "Your honored grandfather, Han Yungch'un, was poor. Yet even though he did not have enough money for his family, he delighted in releasing animals. Every morning when the sun comes up, he goes to the stream near your house with a broom. You know those snails they call 'spiral lions,' and how they wander away from the stream at night. Your grandfather sweeps up the spiral lions and puts them back into the stream where they're safe, and nobody will step on them by accident. Sometimes when he was too poor to buy anything to eat, he would sweep the stream for miles to keep his mind off his hunger. In this way, he saved thousands and thousands of spiral lions.

"People used to laugh at him. 'Can't you find anything better to do with your time?' some people said. Others asked, 'If you're so hungry, why don't you eat the snails? Everybody knows they're tasty!' Most people just sneer and call him a fool, but he doesn't mind a bit. He just does what he feels is right. He doesn't think it's necessary to pay attention to what people say about him. And anyway, every time he puts the spiral lions safely back into the water, he has a wonderful feeling of satisfaction. He feels happy, and that kind of happiness can't be bought with any amount of money.

"Your grandfather has done this for over forty years now. He has saved so many lives that not only has he earned great fortune for himself, but also his luck will carry over to his children and grandchildren for many generations. You will benefit from your grandfather's kindness."

There the dream stopped. Han Shihngeng threw himself into his work, and sure enough, he gradually rose to higher and higher posts, until he finally reached the highest position in the whole Chinese empire. He was even sent to Korea on a special mission. He was important and powerful, and his family prospered for many generations. This was because his grandfather had been such a kind man.

SWEEPING SNAILS





THE PRICE OF BREAKING LAWS

In 1836, the government of Chiangyin county announced a new law forbidding farmers to kill frogs, because frogs eat many harmful insects and protect the crops, so people shouldn't kill frogs to eat.

When this law was posted, someone told Chang Ah-Hsi about it. He made his living catching frogs to sell in the market as meat. He couldn't read, so he didn't know about the new law. When they told him, he didn't like what he heard.

"Well, I'm not going to obey that law. Why waste good frogs?" He was so rude and so stubborn that his friends finally gave up trying to get him to change his ways. He killed many frogs.

He always liked to use some of the money he got from selling frogs to buy some liquor and get drunk. Then he would say, "What's wrong with catching frogs? Look, I'm getting along fine, see?"

His friends would tell him, "Yeah, but it's not too good, because it is against the law, after all."

That would make Ah-Hsi mad. "What's so great about the law? Lots of people break the law, not just me."

But then one stormy night, Chang Ah-Hsi disappeared. The next morning, when the storm had blown over, the villagers found him. He had fallen into the river and drowned. That could happen to anyone. But what was strange was that hundreds of frogs had come to eat his corpse, in revenge for all of their relatives that he had sold for food.

Nobody had ever seen anything like it before. They realized that even though you may get away with breaking the government's laws for a while, you can never get away with breaking the laws of the universe.

Sooner or later, your good deeds will be rewarded, and your bad deeds will catch up with you.

EXECUTED BY EELS

In *A Record of Wide Love*, Meng P'ingan tells this story:

In Suchow, there was a restaurant that specialized in eel noodles. The boss, Tai Tap'an, was a nasty man. He was cruel and selfish. His restaurant was more successful than any of his competitors' because he thought up a very ingenious way to cook the eels. He lined the inside of the steamers the eels were cooked in with nails, and put the eels in alive. When the steamers were put over the fire, the eels would move around trying to get out, and cut themselves open on the nails. Their blood would go into the noodles, and many customers thought the taste was excellent.

One day Tai was counting up his money on his abacus. He threw his head back and laughed, "Ha, ha, ha! I am getting rich!"

"Papa," his son, Tai Hsihsin, said, "Let's go into some other business. It's too cruel to make money this way, even if we are getting rich."

"Dummy! What is there to live for besides money? Go on with you. Some other business? What other business can you make so much money in? You kids are full of nonsense."

One day Tai Tap'an was nowhere to be found. Tai Hsihsin looked everywhere for him. One of his neighbors came running up and said, "We've found him! Quick, he's in the river!"

Tai Hsihsin ran to the bank where all the villagers were standing and looking at the strange sight. Tai Tap'an had been drowned by thousands of eels which held him under water until he died.





BLOOD-STAINED MONEY

Chao Yung was a peddler. He made his living catching and selling crabs, so he killed many living creatures, but at least he was a very good son. He didn't spend the money he made on himself. He used it to take care of his old mother. Everybody said he was a very filial son.

The son was good, but the mother was not so good. She never taught her son to do good deeds. She spent the money her son gave her eating and drinking.

It all caught up with her, and finally she fell sick in bed. She moaned in pain. When Chao Yung got home, he was horrified by what he saw. His mother was acting like she was crazy. She had taken the hemp rope Chao Yung used for catching crabs and was stuffing it into her mouth and swallowing it! Chao ran over to stop her, but she waved him away. Then she pulled the whole rope out again, and as soon as she got it out, she started swallowing it again. She was moaning and retching all the while. The neighbors heard the noise and came to see what was wrong.

Soon the ropes was covered with blood and filth from her lungs and intestines. The whole room smelled awful, and it was such a disgusting sight that a lot of the neighbors threw up all over the floor.

Finally old Mrs. Chao leaned back on her pillow. "My son has killed many crabs to earn money. This is a crime against nature, but at least he has been filial and used the money to support me. "But I didn't know to make good use of this money! I wasted this bloody money on food and drink, so I have a terrible debt to pay! I have to clean out my insides, or I will suffer for my wickedness!"

Chao Yung was sorry that he had earned his livelihood at the cost of so much suffering for those innocent crabs. Mother and son cried and cried, but before many days had passed, Chao Yung's mother had died miserably.

XLVIII

BIRDS PAY HOMAGE TO THE KING

"Doctor, will my husband get better?" Mrs. Hsieh asked.

The doctor shook his head, and said nothing.

Hsieh had a huge boil on his back, and dozens of small boils all around it. They had tried all sorts of medicines and treatments, but nothing worked.

Doctor Lin said, "This disease cannot be cured by ordinary means. There's no medicine money can buy that will cure this condition."

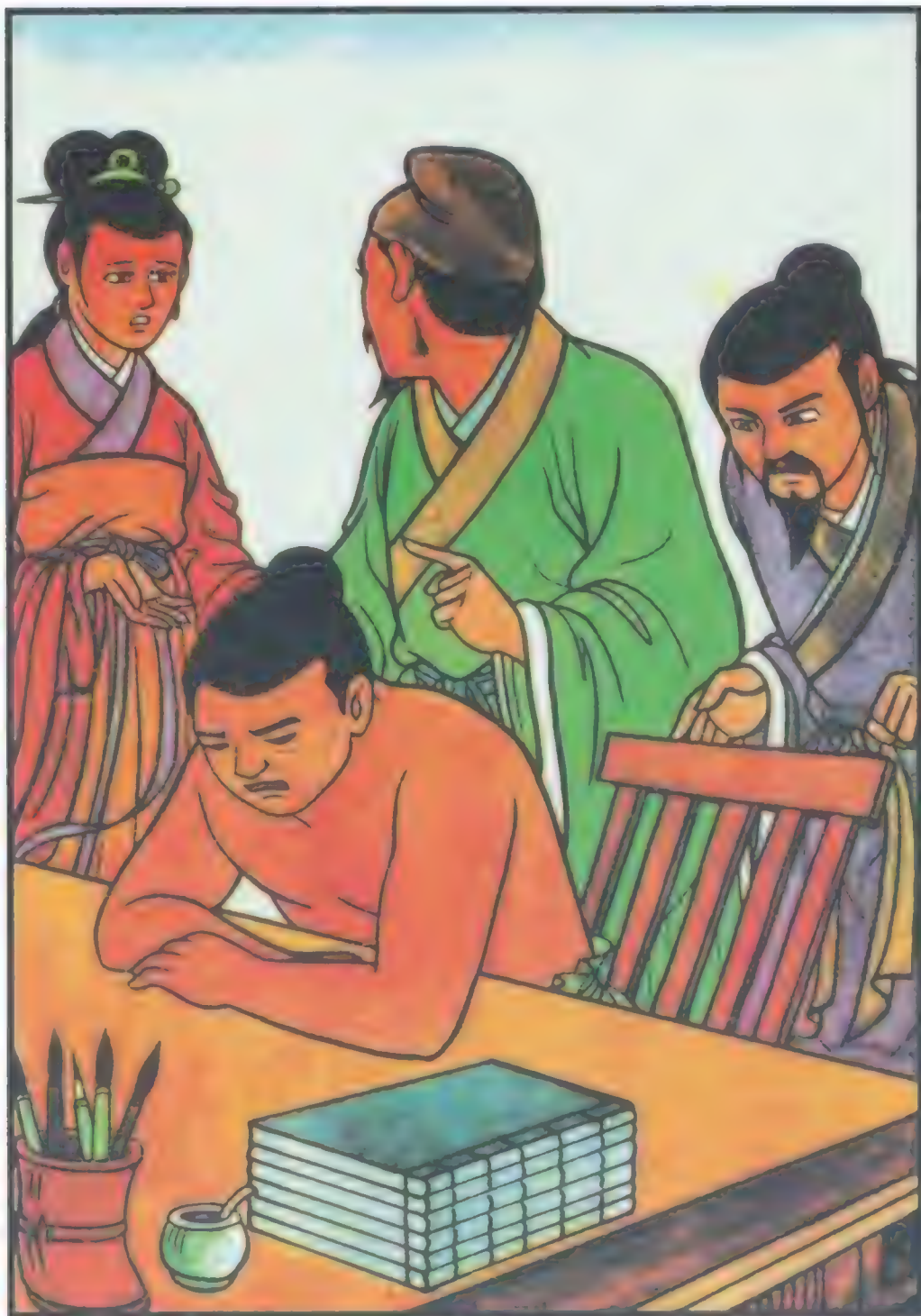
One of the consulting doctors said, "This is a very rare disease. It's so rare you've probably never even heard of it. It's called Birds Pay Homage to the King." When Mrs. Hsieh heard that, she screamed and fainted dead away.

Hsieh was a very rich man. He had begun life as a poor boy, and made a fortune in the lumber business by hard work and honesty. He really didn't have any bad habits, but he did have one particular weakness, common to many Chinese: he loved to eat. Whenever he had a party or a feast, he spent a lot of money to serve the most extraordinary dishes possible.

His favorite of all was a huge, complicated dish. A big fat duck was slaughtered and cooked, and its stomach was filled with sparrows. The diners opened up the duck's stomach with their chopsticks, and found the sparrows baked in the duck. This dish was called Birds Pay Homage to the King!

No wonder Mrs. Hsieh was terrified when she heard what the doctor said! Her husband's disease was called the same thing as his favorite dish. Over years of feasting, Hsieh had killed so many birds that he called down this strange ailment on himself.

Anyone who has had a boil knows how painful they are. Hsieh's whole back was a big mass of boils. Not only did they hurt, but they also reeked, too. He suffered for months, and finally died. All of his riches couldn't do anything for him, because he had caused too many animals to suffer.



IMMUNITY WITHOUT VACCINATIONS



IMMUNITY WITHOUT VACCINATIONS

Shen Wenpao lived near the great lake T'aihu. He was very kind. His whole family was gentle and kind. They released trapped animals whenever they could.

"Have you released those birds I bought from the hunters this noon?" Shen asked his wife.

"Yes, I've let them all go," she answered.

"That's wonderful," Shen said. "Now they are free to fly wherever they please. They can fly in the sky or rest on a branch in the forest." Just thinking about it made Shen so happy that he beamed.

Most of the people in the area trapped and fished. Only the Shens were different. When their neighbors caught some animals, the Shens always bought as many as they could and released them. Their neighbors thought for sure that the Shens were out of their minds. "Why waste good money on a bunch of birds? What good can it possibly do?"

"They're just simple minded, that's all." This is what most of the neighbors said.

But one night, when everybody had gone to sleep except Old Man Li, who had insomnia, he heard voices in the street. When he looked out, he was so scared he fell over.

In the street, he saw two demons bringing an epidemic. Now, of course, we say germs bring epidemics. Maybe a germ is one kind of a demon. At any rate, germs are frightening to think about, and these demons Old Man Li saw sure were frightening to look at! In their hands, they carried dozens of little flags.

One of the demons said, "One flag for each house, right?"

"That's right," said the other demon, "But not that house there. That's the Shens' house. They have released lots and lots of captured animals, so we can't do anything to them."

Within days, a terrible epidemic swept through the T'aihu district. In less than a week, over half of the people there were dead.

But the odd thing was that nobody in the Shen family got even a bit sick. His neighbors then knew that a good heart can earn good rewards. Shen Wenpao lived to a ripe old age and died peacefully, without any suffering.

THE REVENGE OF THE FIELD CHICKENS

Once there was a barber named Liang Chiashou in Wuwui, Anhui. His head was kind of pinched on top like a deer's, and he had beady eyes like a rat. He was no beauty. Outside beauty doesn't matter so much, but he was no beauty inside, either. He always wrangled and dickered. He never tried to improve his behavior or his attitude.

He was greedy, too. His favorite dish was frog -- what some Chinese call *The chicken of the Fields*. He couldn't eat a meal without some field chicken. He knew a dozen ways to prepare frog meat. He had a bunch of friends who were no better than he was, and they all said that field chicken fixed by Liang Chiashou just couldn't be beat!

The more they praised his cooking, the more frogs Liang killed, as if they were enemies he wanted to wipe out. He kept this up until he was in his forties, a middle aged man.

One night, he was sound asleep. Then he felt itchy all over. He seemed to see that his whole bed was covered with frogs. Frogs all over the blankets! Frogs all over the pillows! All over the bedstead! Frogs everywhere!

"Strange," he said to himself. "Well, I know what to do with frogs." He gathered up all these frogs and put them into the wok. Then he went back to his bedroom, and again he found his bed covered with more frogs!

Liang spent the whole night this way, collecting frogs from his bed.

The next day, he got some friends over, and told them how he had spent the night harvesting frogs from his bed. His friends couldn't figure it out, either. Suddenly, Liang grabbed his shoulder.

"The frogs are back!" he shouted.

"I don't see anything," one of his friends said.

"Here, right here, there's a frog on my eyebrows! Now there's one in my hair!" Liang was panicked, but his friends were confounded. They didn't see a single frog. What they saw was Liang running around and hacking off his eyebrows and hair with his razor. But nobody saw a frog at all. "He must be crazy," they whispered.

From then on, Liang saw frogs attacking him every day. He tried to defend himself with his razor, but the frogs kept coming. He begged his friends to help, but only he could see those frogs. He lived like a madman for six more years before he finally died.

Was he worn out from fighting off the frogs? Had the frogs finally taken their revenge? Or was he just out of his mind? Nobody could tell. But everybody knew that Liang certainly wouldn't have suffered so terribly if he hadn't cooked so many frogs.

THE REVENGE OF THE FIELD CHICKENS



COOKED TURTLE



COOKED TURTLE

Fresh water turtle was the favorite food of Cheng Laochi, who lived in Ankang, Tant'u, in Chiangsu province. He loved to eat fresh water turtle for three reasons. First, he said the flesh was just right, not too firm and not too soft. Second, he slept better after eating turtle. Third, he thought turtle meat must be good for the heart and kidneys. So whenever he had enough money in his pocket, he'd go buy a turtle to cook.

"Spare me, please! Be a nice guy and don't murder me!" That's what someone dressed in black said to him in a dream. He knelt in front of Cheng Laochi and pleaded for his life. The funny thing was that after he woke up, Cheng found that his wife had had the same dream.

That morning, a fisherman came to sell a big, fat fresh water turtle he had caught. Cheng Laochi was delighted. He drooled as he paid the fisherman for the turtle, even though the price was high. "Cook it!" he gleefully sang out.

"Just a minute," his wife said, "Have you forgotten our dream last night?"

"Aww, that was just a dream. You can't believe everything that pops up in a dream."

"But I don't think that a man dressed in black could be bringing any good news. Look, husband, why don't you just let this turtle go?"

"What? You want me to let a turtle go when it's only a step away from the kitchen? You woman sure have some weird ideas."

With that, Cheng walked into the kitchen and cooked that turtle. Then he ate it and enjoyed every bite. But for some reason, after he finished, he decided to take a bath.

His wife waited and waited outside the bathroom, but her husband didn't come out again. She listened carefully. She didn't hear him washing. She knocked on the door, but he didn't answer.

Finally, she went in to see what was going on. When she opened the door, she saw the bathtub was full of blood. Her husband had dissolved into the bath water like a turtle cooked into soup, and there was nothing left of him but his hair!

THE POWER OF MERCY

Tashan Temple is one of the biggest temples in Kuichi, Chekiang. Worshipers flock there, and so do many tourists and sightseers. One day two scholars came to the temple, T'ao Shihliang and Chang Chih'ting. We told earlier how the Wise Master began the tradition of having Free Life ponds in temples. Of course Tashan Temple had a big Free Life Pond, and when these two scholars saw the thousands of eels and fish swimming happily in the pond, they were touched. They wanted to do something, too.

"I'd like to buy these eels and take them to the big river where they have more space to swim around. That river flows into the Yangtze River, so they'll have all the space they need. They'll be free for the rest of their lives. What do you think?" T'ao Shihliang asked.

Chang Chih'ting said, "That's a good idea. Let me help."

"I don't have much money. Let's see if we can get some more people to pitch in so we can set more eels free."

"Great! I'll do my best," Chang answered. Chang had an ounce of silver, so he donated that, and then he went to all the nice people he knew and asked them to help. All together, they collected eight ounces of silver that way.

T'ao and Chang were happy. They hired some workmen and made arrangements with the monks in the temple. Then they took thousands of eels from the pond and released them in the river. Later, they forgot all about freeing those eels, but one night in the fall, T'ao had an odd dream. He dreamed that a god strode up and announced very formally, "You two gentlemen may be scholars, but you were originally fated to fail all of the imperial examinations. Let it be known that because you have released thousands of animals and returned to them their natural freedom, you have earned great merit. You have earned enough merit to pass the imperial examinations. I have come to congratulate you on your coming good fortune."

When he woke up, T'ao went to tell Chang about his dream.

"That's amazing!" Chang said. "I had exactly the same dream last night, too!"

Sure enough, when they took the imperial examinations that year, both T'ao and Chang passed. They became important government officials, and they always remembered that their fortune came because they had been kind to dumb animals.

THE POWER OF MERCY





OLD LADY K'UNG

This is something that happened during the later years of the reign of the emperor Ch'ienlung, towards the end of the eighteenth century.

The people in a place called Junchou were all mean. They actually enjoyed killing. Not just the boys and men were cruel, but the old folks, the women, and even the little girls were mean, too. There weren't many little girls, though, because the people there preferred boys. If they had a baby girl, they'd drown her and try again. They didn't care that they were killing their own babies, so you can imagine how they treated animals!

They taught their children to collect 'spiral lion' snails to sell and to eat. Kids gathered snails and clams and frogs, and even the littlest kids knew how to kill these animals with a knife. If a father or mother found their children mistreating animals, they would smile proudly and say, "What a smart kid I've got!"

Of course since the children there were brought up that way, they took it for granted that butchering animals was good, so when they grew up, they killed any animal they could lay their hands on.

But that's not to say that everybody in Juhchou was rotten to the core. There was one nice old lady named K'ung. She was about the only person there who knew better than to kill animals. In fact, she used to save spiral lions that had wandered too far from the water. She saved a lot of ants from getting stepped on. All her neighbors laughed at her and said she was a nut.

One night a fisherman dreamed that two men dressed in black official uniforms picked up a book from the river bank.

"What's that book?" he asked.

"This is a record of good deeds and bad deeds. There are a lot of debts due for all you people's killing. You had better watch out!"

The fisherman didn't think much of the dream, because he had always killed things, but five days later, the whole city of Junchou was wiped out in a big flood. Most of the people there didn't even have a chance to yell for help before they drowned.

Only the old lady K'ung escaped. The day before the flood, her littlest grandchild had come down with malaria. She took him to a temple in the mountains to burn incense and pray for the gods to cure him. A few days later, he was okay, so she left the temple. When she got home, she found the whole town was gone, and only she and her grandchild had escaped. Everybody else was dead.

NO QUARTER GIVEN

Wu Ling was the richest man around. He had plenty of money to spend, so he lived it up.

Wu's son liked to have good times, too. Like father, like son. The son particularly liked to enjoy new and exotic foods. Once when the Wu family were planning a feast, the cook bought home a turtle from the market.

"This kind of turtle is hard to get, but the meat is great! Master Wu will be tickled pink!" The cook chortled while he whetted his knife to butcher the turtle. But just as he was about to chop off its head, he saw that the turtle was crying! It seemed to be begging for its life.

The cook put down his knife and told Master Wu about this strange turtle. "You can't ask me to kill a turtle when it's begged me to spare it."

Master Wu bawled out the cook. "You dumb idiot! Can't you do anything right? Get me a knife, I'll butcher it myself if you won't!" He took his best knife from the drawer and rushed into the kitchen. When he saw the poor turtle crying, he didn't feel sorry for it at all. As quick as a flash, he chopped off the turtle's head. He must have chopped hard, because the head bounced up and landed on the beam holding up the roof.

"Well, never mind that, cook the rest of the turtle and serve it to me this evening."

That evening, the Wus were enjoying the turtle meat. They had eaten only a few pieces when the young Master said he felt dizzy. He looked up and screamed. He pointed at the beam and shouted, "Look out! There's a giant turtle on the beam!"

"I don't see anything there," Wu Ling said.

"Go away! Go away! Ahhh! They're biting me! Help, Papa, they're biting me!"

"What's biting you? There's nothing here!"

"The turtles! There are turtles all over me, and they're biting me! Help!" Young Wu rolled all over the floor and kicked and screamed, but nobody else could see any turtles at all.

"They're eating my feet! Help me, somebody, it hurts!" There was nothing anybody could do for him, because they couldn't see the turtles that were taking young Wu's life.

After three days of this, young Wu died. He was a victim of his own greed and cruelty.

Remember that every one of us is responsible for our own actions. If you don't want to bring suffering down on yourself, don't make other living beings suffer.





ONE HUNDRED LIVES

"Are you feeling any better today?" Fan knew that his wife had tuberculosis, which was not easy to cure, but he took care of her very tenderly.

"Thank... you... for... your concern," his wife gasped out painfully.

Fan asked the best doctor in Ching'ou, Ch'en Shihying, to treat his wife. Doctor Ch'en examined her carefully, and took Fan aside.

"There is a way to cure her, even though she is quite sick," the doctor said. "Take the heads of one hundred sparrows, and make them into medicine according to this prescription. Then on the third and seventh days eat sparrow brains. That should do the trick. This is a secret passed down from my ancestors, and it never fails. But remember, you have to have one hundred sparrows. You can't be even one short."

Fan was eager to help his wife, so he rushed out and bought one hundred sparrows. They were all crowded into one big cage. They chirped and hopped around mournfully, because there wasn't enough space for them to enjoy themselves. Maybe they even knew they were going to be killed.

"What are you doing with all those sparrows?" Mrs. Fan asked.

"This is Doctor Ch'en's special prescription! We're going to make them into medicine, and you'll be up and around in no time," her husband cheerfully responded.

"No, you can't do that!" Mrs. Fan sat up in bed. "You can't take one hundred lives to save my one life! I would rather die than let you kill those sparrows for me!"

Fan didn't know what to do.

"If you really love me," she continued, "Do as I say. Open the cage and let all of those sparrows go. Then even if I die, I will die at ease." What could he do? Fan took the cage out to the woods and let all one hundred sparrows go free. They flew into the bushes and trees and sang and cheeped. They looked and sounded very happy to be free.

In a few days, Mrs. Fan got out of bed again, even though she hadn't had any medicine. Her friends and relatives came to congratulate her on her speedy recovery from such a terrible disease. Everybody was very happy.

The next year, the Fans had a baby boy. He was lively and cute, but the funny thing was, on each arm he had a birthmark, and the birthmarks looked just like sparrows!

WILD GEESE

In 1613, General Ch'ien of Chenchiang, Chiangsu, was leading his troops back to the city in boats. They were out in the middle of the gigantic Yangtze River, the longest in China. General Ch'ien was in his cabin with a book in his hand. You just don't come out and say that a general was snoozing, but he seemed to agree with the book a lot, because he kept nodding his head.

Above the boat, a wild goose was calling, crying sadly. It had followed this boat for a hundred miles. It wouldn't go away. That was because there was another wild goose, trapped in a cage by one of General Ch'ien's soldiers. That was its mate. They called to each other, but the one was trapped, and the other couldn't do anything but follow and call.

But the hard-hearted soldier who trapped her was not moved at all by this, even though some of the nicer soldiers told him he ought to let her go. "No way! It's goose soup for me this evening, after we reach the shore!"

When the boat had almost reached the dock, the goose in the cage looked up and called especially loudly to the goose in the air. Immediately, the free goose zipped down to the deck and stood by the cage with his mate. The goose in the cage stuck out her head, and the two wild geese hugged each other around the neck, just like human couples meeting after a long separation.

"Aww, ain't that cute?" one of the old soldiers watching said.

"Cute? It'd be a waste of heaven-sent food not to do something now," said a mean soldier. He grabbed his sword and with one slash chopped off both of the geese's heads.

General Ch'ien had heard a commotion and came out to see what was going on, but he was too late to stop the soldier from killing those poor geese. He hit the roof.

"Put that man under arrest! Who trapped that wild goose in the first place? You? You're under arrest, too!" The general was furious. "Guards! I will not tolerate such cruelty among my men. Give each of these savages thirty strokes with the bamboo poles, to teach them a lesson about pain!"

When those two soldiers had been beaten, they knew that nobody likes to suffer, and you should do unto others as you would have others do unto you.

Not long after that, both of these hard-hearted soldiers came down with some strange sickness the doctors couldn't cure, and before the next migration of the wild geese, both men were dead and buried.



THE SNAKE'S PEARLS



THE SNAKE'S PEARLS

"What is *that*?" asked one sentry.

"It's just a snake. Let's kill it," said his buddy. They took up their spears to kill that colorful little snake.

"Halt!" came the voice of command. Both men froze when they saw it was the Duke of Sui himself telling them to stop! "Can't you see it's already wounded? Poor thing." Sure enough, they could see that the snake was already wounded in the head.

The Duke kindly picked up the snake with his staff, and took it to the river bank. He told the soldiers to leave it alone.

A while later, one sentry called the other, "Hey, look, that snake's come back again."

"Yeah, and it's got something in its mouth."

"Say, will you look at that? It's carrying a pearl!" The other soldiers came running when they heard that. The little snake just kept going straight ahead. "See where it's going," someone called. They got out of the way, and the little snake went right to the Duke's tent and dropped the pearl at his feet.

"That certainly is nice of you," said the Duke, "But I'm an imperial officer. I'm not supposed to accept gifts, you know." The snake wouldn't budge an inch until the Duke picked up the pearl and put it in his pocket.

That night, the Duke dreamed that he stepped on a snake by accident. He was so startled that he woke up and looked at his feet to see if he had been bitten... it was just a dream. But what's that? He found another pearl sitting by his feet, and that was no dream.

Two beautiful pearls! The Duke was a kind man, and really didn't want any reward for saving the snake, but he had two priceless pearls and nobody to return them to, so he put them away as a reminder to be kind to all living things.

This story spread far and wide, and many people were realized that even an animal that crawls on the ground values its life. This story got even some nasty people to think, and to change their ways. Gradually, more and more people learned to love life and to stop killing things and tormenting animals.

For the Duke of Sui, that was a much better reward than the pearls!

THE TURTLE WHO HEALED THE MAID

"Don't forget to scrub that turtle thoroughly before you cook it," the Ch'engs said on their way out to do some errands. "It's so big you'll have to be careful how you cook it. Be sure to do a good job."

"Sure, I know," their maid said. When they had left, she went to the kitchen and looked at the turtle, figuring out where to start. But when she saw the turtle sitting there on the floor, she felt sorry for it. "Poor turtle. Wouldn't you rather be swimming in the river than swimming in gravy?"

Why did the maid feel sorry for this particular turtle? She had cooked plenty of turtles for the Ch'engs, because they loved to eat turtle. Well, who knows, she felt sorry for it, that's all, so she picked it up and headed for the door to let it go.

"No, that won't do, what'll the Ch'engs do when they come back expecting a turtle feast and I tell them, sorry, I let it go? But even if they whip me, that won't hurt me as much as cooking this turtle would hurt it." So the maid made up her mind and let the turtle go.

Sure enough, when the Ch'engs came back ready for a feast and found the table bare, they bawled out the maid and beat her and whipped her. But she got over it, and everybody more or less forgot about it.

Later, there was an epidemic. The maid got terribly sick. The Ch'engs had the doctor in to look at her, and the doctor told them they might as well get her coffin ready, because she was a goner.

That night, the maid sensed something crawling out of the pond, something slimy, wet, and muddy. It was coming closer to her. Closer and closer it came. It came into her room, and crept up to her bed. Then it crawled onto her bed, but for some reason, the maid wasn't frightened.

Then that wet, muddy thing climbed up on top of her, and she felt cool all over. She hadn't felt so comfortable for days.

The next morning, Mrs. Ch'eng came in with a tape measure to see what size coffin to buy, and found her maid sitting up. She was all muddy, but she looked much better. "You're up?" Mrs. Ch'eng asked.

"Yes, Ma'am, it's very strange, but I feel a lot better today."

"Why are you all muddy?"

The maid told her about what happened during the night. Mrs. Ch'eng really got worried then, because she thought her maid was delirious. She decided to keep watch that night.

At midnight, the Ch'engs saw that big turtle the maid had let go crawl back into the room and smear mud all over the maid. They couldn't believe their eyes, but within days, their maid was up and around again, one of the only persons to recover from the epidemic.

From then on, the Ch'engs never ate another turtle.

THE TURTLE WHO HEALED THE MAID



LOOK, LOOK, THEY'RE FREE AGAIN



LOOK, LOOK, THEY'RE FREE AGAIN

Li Chingwen was very kind. He would go to the shore and ask the fishermen, "What have you caught today? Fish? Crabs? Turtles?" Then he would pull out his money and buy the fishermen's catch, and let all those fish and crabs and turtles go free. Maybe you think he had a lot of money to throw away, but actually, he wasn't rich. He just enjoyed saving doomed animals.

Whenever he let those animals go, he would smile happily and say, "Look, look, they're free again!" He would be happy for the rest of the day.

Mr. Li was an alchemist -- that's like a chemist and a psychologist and a philosopher all in one. He experimented with all sorts of unknown chemicals. Occasionally he even swallowed some of them to see what would happen. You can guess what happened. He ended up poisoning himself. He got a great big boil on his back, and no medicine could cure it. It hurt so much he could barely sleep at night.

He was tossing and turning in bed. No matter which way he lay, his back hurt. Then he seemed to see fish and crabs and turtles blowing bubbles across his back. They licked his back and he felt indescribably comfortable. In a short time, his aching bones stopped aching, and his back was all right. He jumped out of bed. "Wow, I can walk! See, I'm okay again!"

The doctor couldn't believe it. No boil that bad could be cured so quickly! But the boil was gone, and all the poison was out of his system. As a matter of fact, he was even healthier than he had been before his sickness.

For the rest of his long life, whenever Li Chingwen had a bit of money, he went to the docks and the market and politely asked the fishermen if they had caught anything -- fish? crabs? turtles? Then he would get out his money and take the fish and crabs and turtles to the shore and let them go. With a big smile on his face, he would say "Look! Look! They're free again!" and watch until the last one was out of sight. Then he would turn and walk home happily.

A KIND OFFICIAL

P'an was a county magistrate. He was honest and kind. He was always nice to the people in his county and to the animals there as well. He made a law that nobody in the county could make a living by fishing in the rivers and lakes there. Anybody who got caught doing that would be arrested for committing a crime. Even though a lot of people there had made their living that way before, they knew that their magistrate was a kind man, so they didn't complain at all. They obeyed his law, and everything went well in his county.

Everything went so well that when another, bigger county needed a magistrate, the government decided to send P'an to take over. When the people in his old county heard P'an was being promoted, they were happy for him, and proud, too, but they also felt sorry. Would their new magistrate be as nice?

When the time finally came for P'an to leave, the road was crowded with all the people who had come to see him off. There were men and women and boys and girls. There were old folks so aged that they had to be held up by their grandchildren. There were babies so little that they had to be carried by their parents. They had all come to say good-bye to P'an.

One man stepped forward from the crowd and knelt down before P'an. Very formally, with both hands, he presented P'an with ten ounces of silver. "This is a small token of my sincere appreciation. I hope that your honor will accept."

"I will do no such thing," huffed P'an. "I told you all that you shouldn't prepare any gifts for me. Didn't you get that straight?"

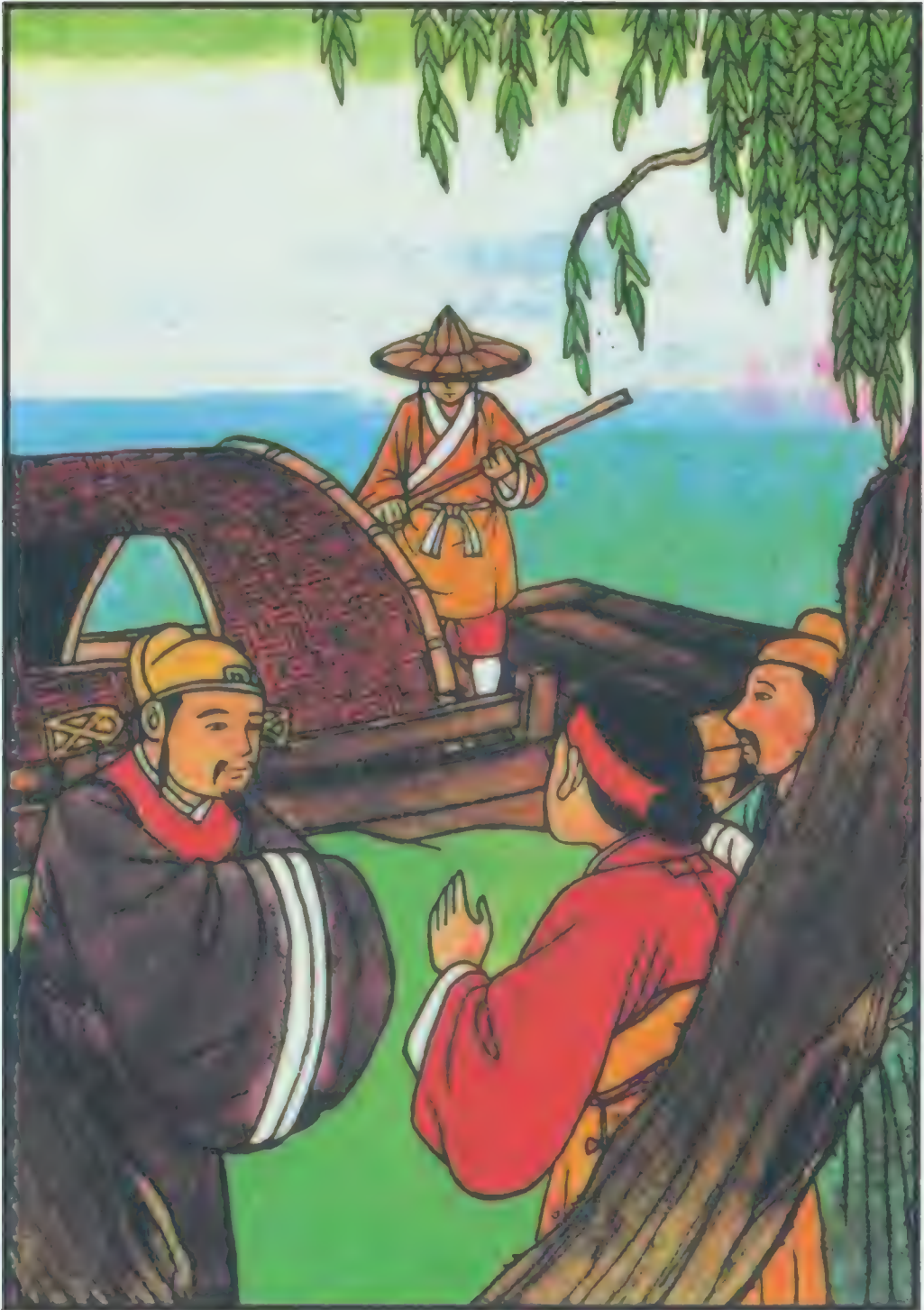
"This is different. I used to be a thief, but then I got caught. I thought I was doomed, because thieves usually get their heads chopped off. But you didn't put me to death. Instead, you told me to change my ways.

"I really did change my ways. I was so touched by your kindness that I decided not to do bad things anymore. I learned a trade. I even got married, and now I'm raising a family. "Everything I have today is due to your kindness. If you hadn't been so kind, now I would be a headless corpse, rotting in the grave. This is why I have come to show my gratitude."

Of course P'an wouldn't think of accepting his gift, but this shows what a kind official he was.

People living near the lakes and rivers of the county heard sobbing and crying coming from the water. The fish knew their good days were over, and once again they would be caught and tortured to feed people.

Even a fish or a crab values its life, and feels sorry when its protector leaves it.





MASTER HSIN ENDS A DROUGHT

Master Hsin was a monk with the deep wisdom and great powers that can be earned only by carefully developing your behavior. Because he was so wise, he was merciful. Because he was so powerful, he was lenient.

Once he saw an old fisherman with a basket. He looked in the basket and saw that it was full of turtles. He knew that whoever bought the turtles would eat them. "Poor turtles," he thought, "You wouldn't like to die, would you?" So he got out his wallet and bought the whole basketful, and let them go in a Free Life Pond.

A few years later, there was a terrible drought. All the farmers were worried, because if it didn't rain, their crops wouldn't grow, and they might starve to death. People then knew all about starving to death, because it happened so often. When there was a drought, there would be so many hungry people that they couldn't all be fed. People would eat weeds and bark to stay alive, and many people would die.

Sometimes when a drought began, the farmers would sacrifice cows and goats for rain, but that usually didn't do much good.

This time, one of the farmers first had a good idea. "Let's ask Master Hsin for help. He's so powerful, he ought to be able to do something!"

A whole crowd went to the temple and asked Master Hsin to bring rain. He smiled quietly, and told them, "Sure, no problem. I'll pray for rain for you, but you have to help first. From now until our ceremony, none of you can kill anything. Until then, all of you have to eat only vegetarian food. Otherwise, it won't work."

Well, even for some selfish people who can't go without meat, vegetarian food beats no food at all, and everybody respected Master Hsin anyway, so they all promised they wouldn't kill anything or eat any meat or animal products.

On the day of the ceremony, all the local people came to the temple with offerings of fruit and incense. Master Hsin was waiting for them. When everybody was ready, he lit some incense and began to pray: "Om! Dajrta salo salo..."

"I can't understand a word he's saying," someone said.

"Do you really think this is going to work?" some of the people asked their neighbors.

Many people said, "If he really pulls this one off, I'm going to become a vegetarian from now on."

The Master kept praying, and before the first stick of incense had burned down, the clouds opened up and poured rain on the thirsty earth. All the people knelt in respect, and you couldn't tell if their faces were wet from the rain or from their tears of gratitude.

HOW AH-3 GOT OUT OF THE WELL

Once there was a bad monk called Liaok'ung. He didn't act like a monk. He never did nice deeds or helped living creatures. He didn't look like a monk, either. Most monks do so many good deeds, and think so many nice thoughts, that they look kind and gentle. Not Liaok'ung. He always walked around with an expression on his face like a porcupine in a bad mood.

He was interested in a member of the lily family called Deer Bamboo. Its formal name is Huangching. It grows about three feet high, with pointed leaves. At the beginning of summer, pale green bulbs appear hanging below the leaves, and then it grows a dark colored fruit about the size of a bean. The leaves and root are sweet, and they say that Deer Bamboo can even lengthen your life.

Really? This can make you live longer? That's what Liaok'ung wanted to know, but he didn't want to experiment on himself. He had a neighbor named Tang Ah-3, who had a number instead of a name. He was the dumbest guy around.

Liaok'ung put a bunch of Deer Bamboo in the bottom of a dry well and called Ah-3 over.

"Ah-3, I have to say you're a great guy and a true pal. I like you so much I'm going to tell you a secret. Look down this well here. See that Deer Bamboo down there? All you have to do is stay down there and sniff it and you can live forever."

"Really? Gee, that's great! I'm lucky to have you for a friend!" Ah-3 believed Liaok'ung, and he was so touched that he almost cried as he climbed into the well. Once he got inside, Liaok'ung fastened the cover on the well. When Ah-3 realized he was trapped, he did begin to cry.

By sundown, the air in there was getting bad. Ah-3 thought, "If I don't get out of here pretty soon, I'll smother before I starve." But he couldn't get out. All he could do was cry.

But then, between his sobs, he heard a voice calling him. "Ah-3! Ah-3! Tang Ah-3! Can you hear me?"

"Who's that?" It was so dark he couldn't see a thing.

"Don't worry! There's a little hole in this well cover. If you look carefully, you can see starlight through it. What you have to do now is lie down quietly and look through that hole. You have to concentrate, and keep concentrating. Then your whole body will fly up in the air and you can get out of the well."

"Are you kidding? Who are you?"

"I am a fox. Everybody knows foxes are full of tricks, and I am too, but once I got trapped and you freed me. Don't you remember?"

"Oh, yeah, I do. Huh. Hey, I didn't know you could talk."

"I don't unless I have to. You're in a terrible fix, so I've come to help you out, since you saved my life before. Now hush, no more chatting. Lie down and stare at that hole! Your life depends on it!"

Ah-3 did as he was told, and a week later, sure enough, he flew out of the well. Then he went home and had dinner.

When Liaok'ung saw that Ah-3 was back, he was sure that Deer Bamboo

HOW AH-3 GOT OUT OF THE WELL





worked, so he dumped a pile of it down the well and jumped in after it. He had a friend put on the lid after he jumped in.

A month later, the friend thought, "Liaok'ung sure is quiet down there in his well. Maybe I ought to take a look to see how he's doing." He opened the well, and down there at the bottom, on a big pile of Deer Bamboo, he saw the bad monk Liaok'ung, smothered to death.

LOTUS POND AND THE CENTIPEDE

About 400 years ago, there was a great monk called Liench'ih, which means Lotus Pond. He hoped all living creatures could be born again in the lotus pond in Amitabha's Pure Land.

Once he saw a man with a bunch of centipedes strung out on a sliver of bamboo. They were suffering. Liench'ih asked, "Would you be so kind as to free those centipedes?"

"No way! These are poisonous centipedes that make good medicine. I won't let them go, but I might sell them to you, if you paid."

"Fine with me. How much do you want?" Even though that man was very rude, Master Liench'ih smiled and talked politely to him. He bought all the centipedes, but they were almost dead because they had been skewered on that bamboo spike. Only one was still in good shape. It looked at Liench'ih for a long time. Then it ran away on all of its legs.

Some time later, Liench'ih and a friend were sitting around talking about Buddhist sutras, or holy books. Suddenly, his friend's face went pale. "Look at the size of that centipede!"

A huge, hairy, scary centipede was crawling up Master Liench'ih's sleeve. His friend ran for a stick to brush it off, but the centipede wouldn't move. Liench'ih didn't seem worried.

"What if it bites you?"

Liench'ih talked to the centipede. "Could you be that centipede I set free a while back? If you are, just sit there quietly and I'll teach you about Buddhism."

The centipede didn't move, so the Master very gently said, "Anyone who wants to thoroughly understand what all the Buddhas know, has to see that the nature of everything in the material universe is a product of our minds.

"All life is made by our minds. A person with a vicious heart becomes a wolf or a tiger. A person with a poisonous mind becomes a snake or a scorpion, or some other poisonous insect.

"You are now a poisonous centipede. Is this just chance? No, you must have had a poisonous mind in a past life. If you want to leave behind your sufferings, leave behind your poisonous mind, and you will be free. But only you can free yourself.

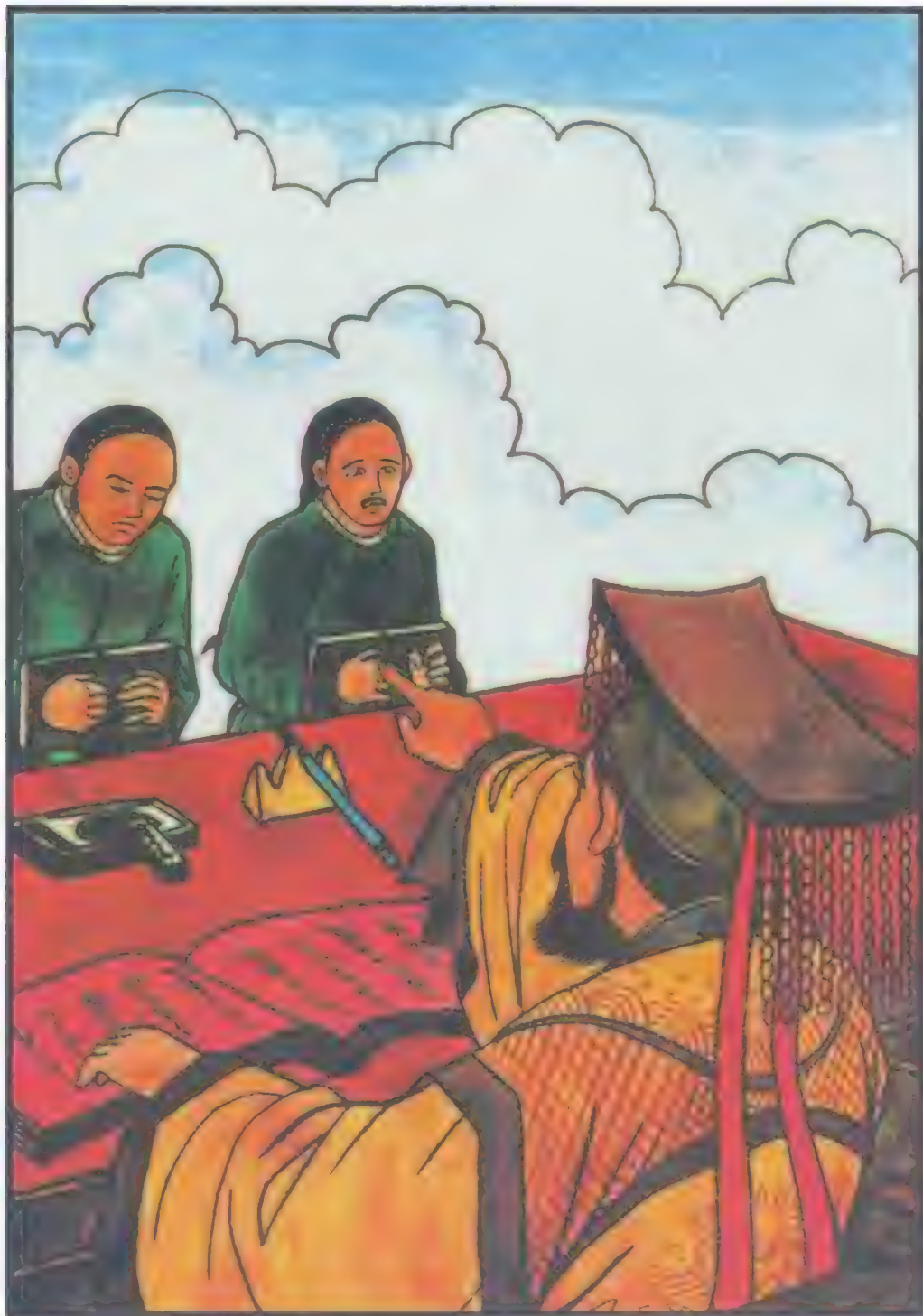
"Understand? That's good. Now, it's time for you to go. Be good!"

The centipede slowly crawled out the window. The master's friend slowly crawled out from under his seat.

The Master told him, "You may think animals are free, but they live in fear. Worse than that, they live in ignorance. Life is full of suffering. If you want to be free from rebirth, ask Amitabha to take you to live in his Pure Land. There you can study to become a Buddha yourself. You will be free from rebirth, and you can save other living creatures. Isn't that better than living and dying and living and dying?"

LOTUS POND AND THE CENTIPEDE





ELEVEN LIVES AS A COW

In about 1815, a man named Lin Szuch'i died. His family and friends were sad, because he had been such a nice person.

Lin found himself in Hell. There is a court there, presided over by the King of Hell. The bailiffs are demons with bulls' heads and horses' faces. Other demons are waiting eagerly to go get the next to die. The walls are hung with terrifying instruments of torture. These are all created by our own wicked thoughts and evil acts, not by any gods or devils.

A doctor, Yin Chih, was dragged into the court. "Oh no, I've just died! Then this must be the court where I'll be judged." Just thinking about it horrified him.

"On your knees, scum!" roared the bailiffs. Yin knelt, and noticed someone else kneeling beside him. Then he realized he knew the other prisoner -- it was his friendly local butcher, Li Pi.

Li Pi was in no friendly mood now. When he saw Dr. Yin, he stuck his finger in his face and told the King, "It's all his fault! He's the one! If he didn't eat beef, I wouldn't kill any cattle! Take him, and let me go!"

Yin wouldn't have any of that! He said, "Your honor, if he didn't kill cattle, I wouldn't eat beef." Li was furious when he heard that, and the bailiffs had to drag them apart.

The King slammed his fist on his desk. "SILENCE! One killed and the other ate. You're both equally guilty!"

"Don't you have a conscience? Cows and bulls plow fields to grow grain to feed you, but you don't have any gratitude; you eat these innocent beasts. If people eat a lot of beef, a lot of cows die. If people eat a little beef, few cows die. If people eat no beef, no cows die. Do you two understand that?" They nodded submissively.

"Li Pi! For your crimes against living creatures and against your conscience, I sentence you to Hell, where you will suffer until you have learned your lesson. Take him away!" The demons gleefully dragged the howling butcher away, kicking him as they went.

"Dr. Yin Chih! You have eaten too much beef. Every time a patient invited you to dinner, you insisted on eating beef. Do you have any idea of how many cows you have eaten? Do you admit your guilt?" Dr. Yin hung his head and nodded.

"Not only that, but eleven of your patients died due to your stupidity and carelessness.

"For your crimes, I sentence you to eleven lives as a cow, wherein you will pay back your debts to those victims of your malpractice. You will end each life in suffering under the butcher's knife, as just compensation for the torments you caused innocent living creatures. Take him away!" Dr. Yin screamed as the demons pulled him out of the court.

"As for you," the King turned to Lin, speaking in a different tone, "You have been good to your parents and loyal to your country. It's not your time yet, so you can go back. But be sure to tell everyone what you saw here, so they do not end up in this predicament."

And with that, Lin Szuch'i came back to life.

TEN DAYS BEFORE THE PLOW

Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva is called Titsang, Jizo, or Earthstore, in Chinese, Japanese, and English. He is so kind that he enters Hell to save suffering souls.

In a temple on Nine Flower Mountain in Shanhsi you can see the body he left behind after one of his reincarnations. In 1840, a group of believers went to pay their respects to him, but among them was a mean guy named Tiao Tsuan. He loved to eat meat, especially beef. But cows and bulls are big, patient animals, and since Chinese farmers plow with water buffaloes, beef is taboo for most Chinese. In the temple they visited, they saw a picture teaching people to be nice to cows and bulls.

Tiao didn't think much of that. He sniffed and said, "Not me! I can't do without beef, let me tell you!"

No sooner had the words left his mouth than he dropped to the floor, foaming at the mouth and twitching.

"He has desecrated the temple!" The whole group got down on their knees to plead Ksitigarbha to forgive Tiao. He stopped twitching, but he didn't seem to know who or where he was.

His friends put him on a stretcher and took him to the house of a relative who lived nearby. "We don't have a bedroom for him, so he'll have to go into the study," his relative said. They were afraid he might go into another fit, so they tied him to the couch and made plans to take him home the next day.

The next morning when they opened the door, the study looked like a typhoon had hit. Somehow Tiao had gotten out of the ropes. All the furniture was turned over, there were books and papers all over the floor, and the blanket they had covered him with was in shreds. Tiao was down on all fours, snorting and pawing like a bull.

Somehow they got him back to his own house. When his wife saw him, she fainted dead away. She woke up and wailed and asked what had happened to her husband.

When she heard, the whole family swore off beef immediately. They made a vow that every summer, they would make a pilgrimage to Nine Flower Mountain.

They prayed and prayed, but Tiao stayed down on all fours and kept crawling back and forth across the room. Nobody could stop him, even if they tied him.

His family kept asking Ksitigarbha for help. Suddenly, on the tenth day, Tiao dropped to the floor again. When he opened his eyes again, he was normal.

"What happened to you?" his relatives crowded around to ask.

"Don't ask! I've spent the last ten days plowing fields," Tiao answered with a shudder.

From then on, Tiao never ate another piece of meat. Whenever he saw a cow or bull, he made a special point of patting it and saying a few kind words to it.

He knew what it was like.



BULL'S HEAD



BULL'S HEAD

Yeh Ahsan had made a fortune in beef. He was a skilled butcher and a clever businessman, so he was quite proud of himself. He scoffed at taboos against eating beef.

"Ha! Who says there's anything wrong with being a butcher? Look at me! I'm a butcher, and I have everything now!"

Some of his friends gave him good advice. "You're building your fortune with blood. Quit while you're ahead. Go into some other line of work."

"Are you kidding? This is a great job. I'm going to do this for the rest of my life. Not only that, but my children and grandchildren will carry on after me.

"Think of all the money we'll make! What could be better than money? You may talk about your superstitions, but for me, there's nothing like cold cash."

But then Yeh got sick and almost died. The next day, though, he didn't die, but his bottom swelled up and he was covered with bruises. He sat up and got out of bed. His family tried to stop him, but he walked out the door, muttering all the way.

His wife and children followed him all the way to the center of town. There he stopped passers-by and told them, "By order of His Majesty the King of Hell, I am here to tell you to do no wrong. Kill no living creatures.

"You have no idea of the tortures I am sentenced to undergo in Hell. I wish I were alive again to spend my days peacefully under the sun, but I have committed too many crimes. I have made a fortune in beef, and this is my own fault. My bottom has been beaten so brutally that it is all swollen. This is just the beginning. My hard heart has doomed me to suffer the torments of Hell."

His friends were very sad for him. Then they saw that his head had been replaced with a bull's head, as a warning of the dangers greed and wickedness can cause.

TRY SOME BEEF?

Noon on April 10, 1820. Dark clouds covered the sun. Suddenly, the clouds burst and rain poured down out of the heavens. Thunder and lightning filled the sky. Pedestrians scattered, seeking shelter.

One of them dropped to his knees with a shriek. He had been struck by lightning! He was still alive, but burned. The smell of roasting flesh filled the air. He curled up in agony. His whole body shook, and tears fell from his eyes.

In moments, maggots crawled onto his scorched flesh. The man opened his eyes and looked at his sore, wounded body, with his flesh hanging in shreds. He pulled off a piece and stuffed it in his mouth. The onlookers were aghast.

His neighbors tried to stop him. "Fan Tengshan! Don't you know what you're doing? Stop that!"

"Mmm, delicious beef," he told them. "Delicious beef. Try some?"

By this time, most of the onlookers were either fainting or throwing up. Some of the harder ones called his family and they took him home.

He did not die right away. He lingered for several months. By the time he died, there was little flesh left on his bones.

A little girl who lived next door asked her mother, "I know Mr. Fan was mean and used to quarrel with everyone. He was always picking fights with people. But why did he die so terribly?"

Her mother explained, "Fan Tengshan was a famous butcher from Taohsi. He always said he was a butcher because he liked to eat beef so much.

"He used to sit in his butcher's store eating beef, telling his customers, 'Delicious beef. Try some?'"

"He was rich, wasn't he?" the little girl asked.

"Yes, very rich. He used to brag that he would make lots and lots of money. He said he would never be poor as long as there were cows to kill.

"So what good did all his money do him? If he had been kinder, this wouldn't have happened to him."

"Is that why we never eat meat, Mother?" the little girl asked.

"Yes, because I certainly wouldn't want anything like that to happen to any of us. So I don't cause any animals harm. That is the best way to keep out of harm's way."

TRY SOME BEEF?





THE BUTCHER'S END

Chao Fuch'io was a coarse man, but he was rich, because he made so much money selling beef. Every day he butchered at least three heads of cattle. That's quite a bit of beef, so over a period of years, he became one of the richest people in the county.

Around the beginning of the nineteenth century, when Fuch'io was old, his son Kuanghua took over the family business. They were so proud of their business that they put an old stump in front of their gate. They had used that stump for many years as a chopping block. They would put the cow's head on the block and smash it. When people saw that stump, they knew this was a butcher's house.

But one night something strange happened. The stump turned into a cow's head, and rolled all around the streets and roads of the city! The people who saw it were astonished.

That night, people passing by the Chao's place heard the sound of innumerable cattle fighting inside. Nobody could figure out what was going on!

A day or two later, Kuanghua was doing business as usual when a soldier came to buy meat. But since he was buying meat on official business, he wanted a special low price.

"Are you crazy?" Kuanghua screeched. "I'd lose money!" So instead of losing his money, he lost his temper. They quarreled. Kuanghua got so mad that he picked up his cleaver and split that soldier's head wide open!

When Fuch'io heard that his son killed a soldier, he was so upset that he fell over and died.

Kuanghua was put to death. Before long, his widow and children were in rags, begging on the streets. The neighbors said, "We never expected that the rich Chaos would be asking for handouts right outside the gate of their old mansion!"

A Buddhist explained it to them. "They brought it down upon themselves by killing so many cattle. If you do good deeds, you will earn a good fortune for you and your loved ones. If you do bad deeds, you will cause yourself and your family as much suffering as you caused others.

"This is why you should never eat meat. You should try to control your temper, and get along well with all living creatures so that everyone can enjoy life."

Everybody thought that was reasonable. The other butchers in the area realized that what happened to the Chaos could easily happen to them, too, so they closed up their butcher shops and went into other lines of business. Chihho county was a pleasant, peaceful place for many years afterwards.

Now, of course, medical science has proved many times that eating beef is bad for your health. It causes heart disease and cancer. No matter how you look at it, you should know that eating meat can do you no good whatsoever.

SLAUGHTER GOD

Powerful bronzed arms. Whiskers. A pair of blazing eyes. This was Ku Yenlung, known far and wide as the king of the cattle butchers. People would rather have run into a tiger than Ku Yenlung. He was called Slaughter God.

Slaughter God had two sons, just like their father. They were strong and rough. The neighbors were careful to stay out of their way. Not only that, but their mother, Mrs. Ku, was skilled with a butcher's knife, too. She could kill a cow as quickly and neatly as her husband.

This frightening family lived in a big, sparsely furnished wood house. The father and mother slept on a brass bed, but the boys slept on the floor. They kept a big stump in the house as a chopping block to kill cows on. The only other decoration was strips of meat hanging from hooks in the windows. Legs, heads, tails, and all the other parts of cattle's anatomy hung from the hooks.

With the whole family at work, naturally they killed a lot of cattle. Then one day, Slaughter God complained that his eyes hurt. He went to see all the doctors he could find, but none of them could do anything for him. Before long, he was totally blind.

Shortly after that, Mrs. Ku came down with a strange ailment. The skin all over her body seemed to rot and crack. She was in such pain that she could barely stand to get dressed. Even the touch of her cotton clothes seemed like the scraping of a knife.

One night, when her maid, Shen, was taking care of her, she heard the old lady say, "It's the court of Hell. They're teaching me how cattle suffer when we skin them for food.

"I never knew! Even when they're dead, their souls can feel the pain of the knife, the heat of the cooking fire. What agony! Oh, it hurts! It hurts! I wish it would stop!"

Shen was terrified, but there was nothing she could do to stop the torture that Mrs. Ku created for herself by years of mistreating animals.

Cattle never hurt anyone. In the old days, they pulled our ancestors' carts, and in many parts of the world, they plowed the fields. Is it fair to slaughter such nice animals?



BUTCHER STEW



BUTCHER STEW

"You have to go, whether you want to or not!" The fierce butcher hauled on the rope with all his might. The old cow on the other end of the rope knew what was going on. It lowered its head and refused to budge.

"Hurry up, will you!" The butcher pulled out a whip, and cursed as he whipped the old cow. They struggled all the way up the street this way, one cursing and pulling, the other silently resisting.

When they got to a bank, the cow suddenly dropped to its knees in front of the door and started to cry. Big tears rolled down its bovine face. The president of the bank came out to see what the commotion was about. The cow looked so sad!

"Butcher, what is the price for this cow?" he asked.

"It cost 8,000, but I'm not selling it!"

"I'll give you 10,000, what do you say?" The bank president was touched by the cow's tears, and had decided to save its life.

But the butcher sneered and said, "This cow has given me a load of trouble! I've had it with this cow. I'm going to chop off its head and hack it to death, that's what I'm going to do! And I'm NOT going to sell it to you, so don't even bother to raise your price!"

The old cow seemed to understand human speech. When it heard that, it got to its feet with a sigh and went with the butcher.

The butcher was furious that the cow had tried to beg for its life. Instead of taking it to the market, he took it to his own house and chopped it into pieces. He threw the pieces into his biggest wok to cook.

By then it was late, so he left the wok on the fire overnight, so it would be thoroughly cooked and delicious in the morning. Then he went to bed.

But early the next morning, his wife heard him get out of bed. "I'm going to check the fire and see how the beef is doing," he said.

Much later, his wife realized that he still hadn't come back yet. She got out of bed to look for him. In the kitchen, she saw the fire was still going under the wok -- somehow her husband had slipped and fallen into the wok and was cooking with the beef!

A PICNIC OR A LIFE?

Ch'en Hsingyuan of Fuchow told this story.

Once there was a very unhappy group. Some of them had passed the imperial exams and become officials, but for some reason or other had been demoted. Others had never managed to pass the exams in the first place. They were all so depressed they decided to go for a little excursion to a famous temple to cheer themselves up.

When they were there, Ch'en Hsingyuan happened to go out for a breath of fresh air. He saw a farmer whipping a water buffalo, but no matter how he whipped it, it wouldn't move. When the water buffalo saw Hsingyuan, it began to cry. Ch'en Hsingyuan realized that it was crying because it was being driven to the slaughter, and naturally no animal wants to die. Ch'en forgot his own sorrows in his sympathy for that poor water buffalo. He asked the farmer, "How much do you want for your water buffalo?"

"The price of fifteen bolts of silk."

Hsingyuan went back inside. "We've got money in the kitty for our next excursion, but why don't we put that money to a better use?"

"What have you got in mind?"

"Let's buy a doomed water buffalo and let it live out its life in peace."

"But we were going to use that money for a big picnic during the flower season, don't you remember?"

"Yes, but a party lasts only a few hours and then it's over. We could use the same money to save a life. Think about it. Which do you think is a better way to spend the money?"

His friends thought about it. Hsingyuan prodded them a bit. "Come on, cough up. Tell you what. You guys chip in for this water buffalo, and when the flowers are blooming, I'll foot the entire bill for the picnic. How's that sound?"

"For sure?"

"You have my word for it."

His friends saw that his mind was made up, so they got the money together and gave it to the farmer for his water buffalo. Then they gave the water buffalo to the temple and asked them to let it live out its natural life span there.

When the flowers started to bloom, Ch'en Hsingyuan was still just a poor student, but a promise is a promise, so he pawned his best clothes and hosted the picnic, just as he promised he would.

But he wasn't a poor student much longer. The next year he placed very high on the imperial examinations and became an official.

Before long, he had won a very high place in the government, and enjoyed the honor, power, and fortune that go with the post. He was sure that he enjoyed such good luck because he had saved that poor water buffalo.





WHIPPED BY THE GOD

In Kuangtung there was a general who was also a great scholar. His name was Chang Ch'entao. He was a highly trained martial artist. He was rough and strong, and could take on any number of enemies. But he was also a very highly educated scholar who could write poetry as well as the best poets of his day. He was as well known for his writing as for his military prowess.

But, like so many Cantonese, he had a weakness. He loved to eat dog meat. There was never a day when a dog wasn't cooking in his kitchen. He ate dog the way other people eat chicken or pork. As a result, wherever he went, all the dogs howled. They can tell.

Chang was so talented that he was given important posts. Once he was sent to Fukien. During a tour of inspection, he climbed the famous Wuyi Mountain, which sticks straight into the sky like a baseball bat. It is very difficult to climb, so he had to spend the night at a village there.

His subordinates knew their chief liked dog, so they bought some local dogs for his dinner.

The next day, they went to take a look at a Taoist temple with great scenery somebody had told them about.

When they got to the temple, the sorcerer in charge, Ts'ai Yuanying, seemed to want to stop them, but he did not dare say anything to such a powerful imperial official as Chang Ch'entao!

As soon as Chang stepped into the temple, he saw a piercing gold light. He couldn't stand it. He fell down in a faint. When his subordinates picked him up, he couldn't speak, and he seemed to be paralyzed. His whole body was limp, like he didn't have a bone in him. When they felt his forehead, they realized that he was already dead!

His subordinates were in a panic. They asked the sorcerer what was up. He said, "The god we worship here, Wangling, is very powerful. He loves dogs, so people who eat dog meat are usually afraid to come near this place. They dare not provoke such a powerful spirit, or profane his temple.

"I wanted to stop his honor Chang, but he was a powerful Mandarin, so I did not dare to do anything. His choice of coming here means that he was fated to die."

Chang's subordinates were awed. One of them asked, "But why is his body so limp?"

The sorcerer replied, "It always happens that way. Every bone in his bones has been broken into bits, because he has been whipped by the god Wangling."

A DEAD DOG'S REVENGE

Chinese farmers plow with oxen and water buffaloes, so most Chinese do not eat beef, out of gratitude to these trustworthy animals. But many Chinese regard dogs the same as they regard pigs, as a source of meat. So some Chinese butchers specialize in slaughtering dogs.

One such butcher lived in Nanhsiang Village in Chiating, near Shanghai. His name was Ts'ai Liu. Dog meat is especially popular in the winter, because they say it warms you up, so as the New Year festival approached, Ts'ai smiled as he whetted his knives and thought about how much money he was going to make.

Ts'ai had butchered dogs for years. He had the whole routine down pat. He slit a dog's throat and dumped the carcass into a vat of water. After it had soaked, it would be easier to pull out its fur. He always did it that way. Experience builds efficiency. But things went differently this time. After he dumped the carcass in the vat, his eyes bulged, his ears rang, his heart thumped. He had a premonition of impending doom.

Just at that moment, the dog came to life, and with its last might of strength, lunged out of the vat at Ts'ai! His premonition had prepared him: when he saw the dog coming for him, Ts'ai somersaulted backwards, but the dog was already on him! He tried to fend it off with his hands. It sank its teeth into Ts'ai's forearm!

Ts'ai screamed in pain. His neighbors came to see what was wrong. They tried to pry the dog's mouth open with sticks, but its teeth were stuck fast. No matter how many people tried to lever its mouth open, it held onto Ts'ai's arm.

"Who would ever imagine that a dog with its throat slit could have such power?" one of the neighbors asked in amazement.

"This isn't the time for discussion! Get it off me, will you!" Ts'ai rolled back and forth across the floor trying to sling the dog off, but it seemed to be welded to his forearm.

The pain was so intense that tears came to his eyes. The dog kept biting! It hurt more and more. He even wet his pants, but the dog held on!

The pain got worse and worse. His heart couldn't stand it. His neighbors watched helplessly as Ts'ai's face went pale. Then -- Kha! They heard the death rattle in Ts'ai's throat.

He fell back dead. As he died, the dog released its grip and fell down dead with him.

From then on, nobody in that region ever dared to eat dog meat again.





GOING TO THE DOGS

Fengching was a nice little village. Most of the people living there were simple farmers. They were honest and hard-working. Everybody got along well with everybody else, and things went well with them.

With almost all of them. There was one mean guy in the village, called Shen 2, because he was his father's second son. He had a little store, and business was pretty good, so gradually he had saved a small amount of money.

Shen 2 loved liquor, and he loved dog meat. When he was a bit ahead, he'd buy some liquor and cook up a dog and enjoy a little feast.

He'd tell people, "Dog meat smells nice and tastes spicy! What could be better than dog meat cooked just right and washed down with fine liquor!" He would invite his friends to his feasts, so over a period of years, he had butchered quite a few dogs.

In 1756, Shen was feeling weak. One day he keeled over and was put to bed, but even the doctors couldn't figure out what was wrong with him.

His wife stayed faithfully by his bedside, especially after he started having fainting spells. Late on night, Shen was tossing and turning, but his wife couldn't do anything for him. Then she heard him saying something. She leant over to listen, and her blood ran cold as she heard him say,

"Another black dog! It's mean!

"There's a spotted dog attacking me!

"Dog, two, three, four of them, I can't count them all, keep them away from me, please, somebody, keep them away from me!"

By now he was shouting loudly enough to wake the entire household. "Help! Help! Somebody come save me!" Everybody could hear him, but nobody could see a single dog. All they saw was Shen 2 tossing and turning on his bed, with a terrified look in his eyes.

"He must be out of his mind," his relatives said sadly, shaking their heads.

Just before he died, Shen 2 crawled under the bed. He got down on all fours and growled and barked like a dog until he died.

Usually, before a person dies, there will be some indication of where he is going after death. People going to heaven die peacefully, even happily. People going to hell know it. Their suffering begins before they die, and they die miserably.

Shen 2 must have been on his way to a new life as a dog. And the chances are that he ended up in somebody's cooking pot.

THE MARKSMAN

A wide forehead topped by a few strands of hair was set above a pair of popping eyes that never seemed to look straight ahead. His nose was hooked. His mouth turned down, and never seemed to close over his crooked, uneven teeth. He was short and viciously daring. Everybody knew that this was Li Futs'ai of Paoshan.

Li Futs'ai was sinister and sensuous. He was the cruelest man around. He came from a rich family that lived near the river. For protection from floods and from the dampness of the river, thick bamboo groves were planted all around their house. The bamboo attracted birds, which made their nests in the branches.

Guns had already been introduced into China from the West by Li Futs'ai's time. An expert marksman even as a boy, he loved the bamboo groves around his house, because they provided so many targets for him to shoot.

"I got another one!" he shouted gleefully, clapping his hands as another nest tumbled to the ground.

When he grew up, shooting was his favorite entertainment. When he was 50, he still enjoyed shooting. There was no counting the number of birds that had died before his barrel.

But one morning, his family found him jumping around in front of the window. He seemed to be doing some strange sort of dance, because he kept thrashing the air around his head with his arms. He was whining, "Stop pecking me!"

Then he seemed to be protecting his neck, then his shoulders, his arms, his back, his thighs, and finally he was down to his ankles. All this time he kept jumping around like an ant on a hot wok, whining, "Stop pecking me!"

But nobody could see anything pecking him. Then he started shouting "Birds! Birds! Birds!" The expression on his face reminded his family of a mouse when it sees a cat. But they certainly couldn't see any birds.

"I'm a goner!" Li shouted. His arms and legs were twitching. Even though his sons tried, they couldn't straighten them out. He kept working his neck like a large bird flying through the air.

His family could only cry and watch this expert marksman twist and writhe in his death agonies.

THE MARKSMAN



THE LITTER OF FOUR



THE LITTER OF FOUR

There was once an old man named Chu P'ing. He was always kind, but he especially loved animals. One day he went to visit a relative. When he got there, the relative was dragging out four puppies.

"What are you doing with those?" Chu P'ing asked.

"I'm going to go ditch them. Our dog had a litter of four puppies, and you know people say four puppies in a litter is bad luck, so I'm going to get rid of them now."

"Would you give them to me instead?"

"It's your neck. Go ahead." This is how Chu P'ing became the proud owner of four frisky puppy dogs. He took good care of them and enjoyed playing with them, and before long, they had grown into four strong, healthy dogs.

One evening as Chu was sitting at home, he heard a whispering sound in the grasses outside. Closer and closer came the sound, getting louder as it came. First it sounded like a whisper, then a breeze, then it sounded like a mighty wind roaring through the valley!

Chu went out to investigate, and there, a few paces from his door, he saw a huge python! Its body was the size of a wheel. It looked around savagely with its gigantic, mesmerizing eyes, and its bright red tongue hung out, twitching.

Then it spotted Chu! Like an arrow launching from the bow, it charged straight for him! Chu was petrified. He was too scared to even whimper.

Then, just as he seemed to be doomed, his four dogs came flying at the snake! They flung themselves at it, seemingly unafraid of this enormous monster, barking and baying as they attacked from four sides.

The commotion brought out the neighborhood. Nobody dared approach the python, but they all cheered on the four brave dogs from a distance.

In an instant, two of the dogs had fastened themselves onto the python's throat. They were too far up for the snake to bite them. Serpent blood spurted through the air, and in a minute, the huge python was dead.

The dogs inspected the corpse for a moment, sniffing it carefully. Then they contemptuously scratched some dirt over its corpse, and came to Chu P'ing with their tongues hanging out, wagging their tails. All the neighbors burst into applause as Chu P'ing squatted down to pat the dogs. They licked his arms and face.

"Who says a litter of four is unlucky?" Chu P'ing asked his dogs.

"Little did I think that when I saved your lives, one day you would save my life!

"Saving others' lives is saving your own life!"

LADIES IN THE PIGPEN

The capital of Anhui province has a funny name: Hofei. That means Together Fat.

Nearby, in P'ait'ou Village, Hsuan 4 was a hog butcher with over twenty years' experience. He had made a lot of money in this business, and saved it carefully, so he owned three houses. He lived in one and rented out the other two. He also owned a hundred acres of good cropland.

In other words, he really had enough money to retire and take it easy. But few people know when they've had enough. As a matter of fact, Hsuan was so used to killing hogs that he felt something was wrong if he let a day go by without killing something. On holidays, he kept himself busy sharpening his knives.

He got up early one morning as usual to begin his day's work. His wife went into the outhouse, which in old houses was always right next to the pigpen. She happened to look in, and let out a scream that brought her husband running.

"What's wrong? What's wrong?"

"I looked into the pigpen, and I saw two ladies lying there, not pigs! I thought I must be imagining things, so I rubbed my eyes and looked again, and sure enough, two ladies it was!"

"I think this is an omen, dear. Please, don't kill any more pigs!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" Hsuan 4 laughed. "You sure have a strange sense of humor! You just hadn't got the sleep out of your eyes!"

Mrs. Hsuan saw he wasn't going to take her advice, so she grabbed his knife and threw it down the toilet, straight into the cesspool. Ugh! Hsuan 4 didn't kill any pigs that day, but he went out shopping for a new knife.

The next day Mrs. Hsuan asked her parents to come talk with her husband. "Look, you already have more than enough money to see you through the rest of your life. Why don't you just listen to your wife and take it easy?"

"But it's my job to kill hogs."

"If you can't stop it, our daughter is going to move out."

Hsuan thought back on all their years of married life together, and all the money he made killing hogs.

"I guess she'll have to move out."

Hsuan gave his ex-wife half of their property, and she got custody of their child. When everything was settled, Hsuan went back to work, and slaughtered those pigs in the pen, the ones his wife had thought were ladies.

He slaughtered their piglets, too, and just as he finished, someone came running up with the message that his child had suddenly dropped dead.

Hsuan was remorseful, but he was too stubborn to admit he had been wrong. He started gambling to take his mind off his cares. In a short time, all the local gamblers knew that when Hsuan came to the table, their pockets would be filled up, because every time he gambled, he lost.

Before long, he had gambled away all of the property he had left.

"So what?" he said, "I can always go back to butchering, can't I?" He scraped together some money and bought some pigs to raise and slaughter, but before a month was out, he was flat on his back, sick in bed.

LADIES IN THE PIGPEN





He had some strange disease. The blood and pus coming out of his nose hurt so much that he screamed. The people who heard him said he sounded just like a stuck pig!

DEATH BY LIGHTNING

Collected Pearls in the Dharma Garden (Fayuan Chulin) tells that during the Tang dynasty, there was a very skillful cook from Ch'anghu, Pohai. His name was Feng Yuan. The King of Khotan, barbarians in the west, came to pay tribute to the imperial court of China. Feng Yuan was ordered to prepare a state banquet for him and his retinue. Everybody ate and ate and ate until they were stuffed. They all said the food was great, but when the banquet was finished, there were almost one hundred goats left over. They had not even been slaughtered yet. The authorities were not quite sure what to do with them. The King of Khotan happened to hear about this, and he requested that their lives be spared.

"It is my sincere wish that these goats be sent to Buddhist temples to live out their natural life spans."

Feng received the order to let them go, but he figured the King would be going back to his barbaric homeland before long, and after all, ninety some goats means a lot of money! So he did not obey this command. Instead, he sold the goats to a butcher. He was really quite happy about this windfall.

Eventually, he spent all of that money, and as time passed, he probably forgot all about it. He was really a good cook, so whenever the powerful politicians and rich people in the capital wanted a feast, they looked up Feng. He worked hard for his money, but his income was pretty good.

Then, during the summer of 661, Feng was taking a stroll outside the Hsuan-jen City Gate. All of a sudden, the wind came up to blow. The skies turned black, lightning flashed, thunder rolled, and rain poured down.

A particularly loud clap of thunder right by the city wall startled all the people around. When they recovered their wits, they saw a man kneeling in the rain. His hair was disheveled. His eyes were popping. His chin was pressing on his chest, like a convict's before his head is chopped off.

Then people looked again, and realized that his head had been almost chopped off! His head was split wide open, and his brains were dripping out of his skull! He looked like an executioner had cleaved his head.

"Hey, isn't that Feng Yuan, the famous cook?"

"You're right, it is," someone answered. "This must be the result he caused by killing all those goats that were supposed to be let free."

You can never escape for long from evil that you have brought down upon yourself.

DEATH BY LIGHTNING



THE BUTCHER'S FACE



THE BUTCHER'S FACE

Ch'ien Meihsi recorded the story of Hsueh Ch'ingkuang, the goat butcher. He ran his own little store selling mutton and mutton soup. The fame of his delicious mutton soup spread far and wide, bringing lots of customers. Some people even traveled for days to taste his soup, and they all went home satisfied.

With business like that, Hsueh became rich in a short time.

Some of his friends were Buddhists, and told him not to kill any more goats. "You've earned enough money. Don't be greedy. We're not beasts in the jungle, you know. Killing animals is a terrible crime against the universe. You just can't get away with it. Sooner or later your bad deeds will catch up with you, and then no matter how much money you have, it won't do you any good.

"Look, Hsueh, why don't you just use your money to invest in some other kind of business? You can still make lots of money, and at the same time, you can repent and do good deeds to make up for all your crimes. Otherwise, you'll be in big trouble, and even your children and grandchildren will catch it."

Nobody likes to listen to good advice. Hsueh just snorted and sneered. "I'm too smart to believe in that kind of old wives' tale. Don't think you're going to spook me with these fairy tales! Crimes against the universe! What nonsense!"

When Hsueh was about forty, he got a strange disease. His mouth started to jut out, and his jaw got longer. He had a dumb look in his eyes. Actually, all in all, he looked just like a goat!

Pretty soon all the local people knew that Hsueh Ch'ingkuang was looking just like a goat. They all came to see for themselves. They wouldn't say anything to him, but every day, crowds of people came to look at Hsueh. Then they would turn to their friends and whisper to each other and nod their heads. Hsueh got tired of that in a hurry! None of the doctors could do anything for him, but they all agreed that he sure did look just like a goat.

Hsueh was so frustrated that he thought he would lose his mind, but he was too stubborn to admit that he might have been wrong. He refused to admit that maybe he shouldn't kill so many goats.

Finally, on a business trip to Anhui, he fell in a river and drowned. They never did find his corpse.

The sad thing is that Hsueh didn't have to suffer humiliation and a sudden death. If he had been less greedy, and more willing to consider the requirements of our conscience, he could have lived a long and happy life.

But money, stupidity, and stubbornness were more valuable to him than happiness, good health, and wisdom.

A TYPICAL HUNTING ACCIDENT

The mountains were splendid. But Wu T'ang didn't care a whit for scenery. He and his son spent a lot of time hunting in these mountains.

Wu T'ang was a dead shot with his bow and arrow. He never missed. He was such a good shot that he barely had to aim. He just picked a target, pulled his bow, and shot it down. No animal was quick enough or agile enough to escape his arrows.

Look, over there, a little fawn! A little fawn must be one of the most adorable animals in nature, but Wu T'ang wasn't in the mountains to admire nature. As soon as he spotted it, he whipped an arrow out of his quiver and zoom! the fawn fell over dead.

Then Wu noticed its mother a few feet away in the grass. He couldn't get a good shot at her from his angle, so he waited.

She was terribly sad about her little baby! She let out a cry as she starting licking her baby's wounds. Just as she was concentrating on that, Wu pulled off a quick shot and the mother deer died on the spot.

But that wasn't enough for Wu. He thought there might be more deer in the area, because he heard something rustling around in the grass. There was at least one more in there, maybe two.

"Three deer is better than two," he thought, as he prepared. Then he located the source of the sound and shot at a shadow in the grass.

He was proud to hear the sound of another dead body falling to the ground, but his pride turned to anguish when he heard a groan! Deer don't groan like that! That was a human voice!

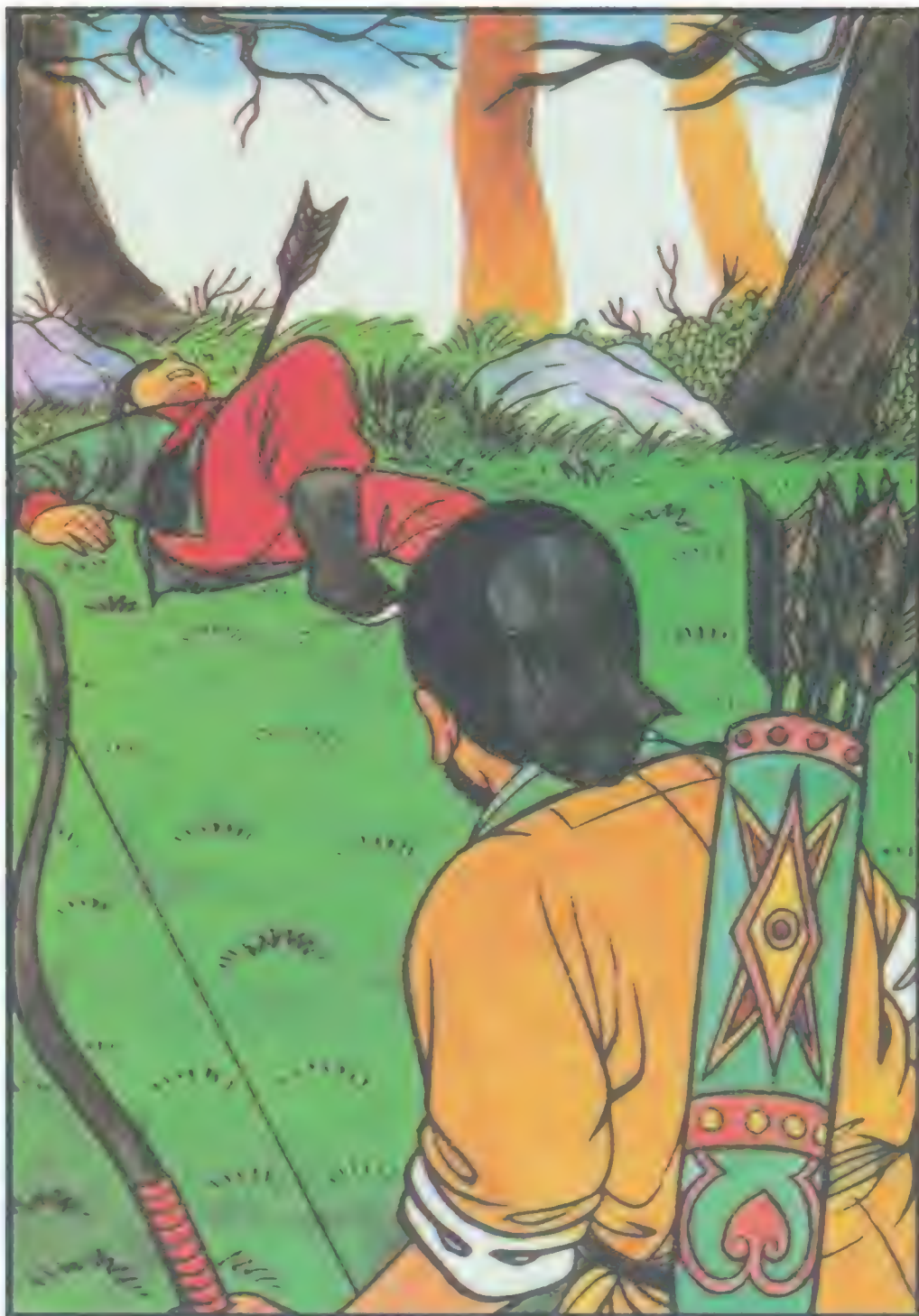
Wu rushed over and saw that his third shot had killed not a deer, but his own son, who had come out hunting with him!

Wu was stupefied. He seemed to hear a voice telling him, "Wu T'ang! Now do you know what it is like to see your baby shot to death with an arrow? Animals love their young as much as you do. How much anguish have you caused animal parents?"

Wu stood there, numb, too heartbroken to pay attention to a sound that came from the side. Then in a flash he realized that the other animal he had heard in the grass was not a deer, but a tiger!

But he was too late. Before he could move, his shooting arm was in the tiger's mouth, and in a moment, the rest of him was, too.

A TYPICAL HUNTING ACCIDENT



THE THIRD FOX



THE THIRD FOX

Wang Honan was a rich man in Huainan. His family made their fortune running a pawnshop. Business was great. They needed more warehouse space, so they bought up some of the empty houses around their pawnshop to use as warehouses.

In one of the empty houses, they surprised a litter of three little foxes. The workmen chased them away, but that wouldn't do for Wang Honan.

"There'll be no end of trouble if we let them get away! Kill them all!" They killed two of the little foxes, but one of them escaped.

From then on, the Wangs never had a day's peace. Things disappeared, other things broke mysteriously, nothing could be found where it belonged. Everybody said the third fox was behind all of this.

In the winter of 1815, a fire broke out in their warehouses, for no apparent reason. Fortunately, it was discovered in time so the damage was not too serious. Wang Honan had a sorcerer exorcise the property, but a few months later there was another fire. Everybody knows how tricky foxes are, and if one sets its mind to mischief, there's no end of trouble.

Finally, some years and endless trouble later, Wang decided to sell the warehouses and be done with it. Chen, a local rich man who also needed warehouses, inspected the property. They agreed on a fair price, 40,000 pieces of gold, and on a date to sign the contract and close the deal.

The day before they were to sign the contract, the Chens heard a voice telling them, "This is a feud between Wang and me. It doesn't have anything to do with you, so you'd better keep out of it." They couldn't tell where the voice was coming from, but Mr. Chen was convinced that he ought to look elsewhere for a warehouse.

"All my wealth is going up in flames!" This is the cry that woke up the rest of the Wangs one night during March, 1841. He rushed out of his bedroom without even putting on his pants or shoes.

Somehow, a fire had started in the kitchen and spread to the warehouses. By the time the family was awake, all of the warehouses were on fire, and by morning, they had burned to the ground.

The third fox had finally taken its revenge.

Animals may not have the intelligence of human beings, but they remember who has been nice to them, and who has hurt them. Clever animals like foxes may even plot revenge with single-minded determination. They cannot be persuaded by reason, and even a skillful sorcerer may not be able to quell them.

The only way to reach such a soul is through penitence and mercy. Wang should have repented killing those foxes, and proved his sincerity by doing good deeds and killing nothing. Then, if he had been able to tell the fox the Buddhist dharma that explain the balance and nature of the universe, they could have patched up their quarrel and become friends and avoided this disaster.

In the end, revenge doesn't do anybody any good.

THE SEAL IN THE RIVER

Li Ch'unt'an was in charge of sending foodstuffs down the river to Tach'angkou in Huaining, Anhui. One of his subordinates, Kung K'ai, came to him and said, "I sure had a strange dream last night."

"What did you dream about?"

"I saw this old guy with white hair and a long white beard. He was crying when he came up to me and said, 'Help! You have to save my life! If you do, I'll be sure to reward you some day!'"

"That sure was a strange dream."

Their conversation was interrupted by shouting. All the soldiers in the escort were yelling excitedly and pointing to something in the water. "Look, sir, " said Kung, "It's a seal! Have you ever seen a seal this far up the river?"

The soldiers captured the seal and dragged it right up next to the boat. Li and Kung went over to have a look at it. When the seal saw Kung, it gave him a long, deep look. His heartbeat quickened. He remembered his dream.

"Sir, I'd like to buy this seal and let it go free. I think it has something to do with that dream I just told you about."

"Okay, if you please. It's your money." Kung got out his wallet and was going to give the soldiers a reward for pulling the seal up to the boat.

They were all happy. All but one mean soldier called Ch'en 4 who insisted that he wanted to eat seal for dinner. He refused to take Kung's money. Instead, he snatched up his spear and stabbed the seal in the head. The seal's blood stained the water red.

"Don't you guys know how good seal meat tastes?" Ch'en asked the other soldiers. "What do you want with that measly little tip? Let's have some seal tonight!" Most of the soldiers felt sorry for that poor seal, but some of them didn't care. They helped Ch'en pull the dead seal aboard, and they ate it with him.

Maybe it wasn't such a good idea to eat that seal after all, because before long, everybody who had joined Ch'en was sick. Ch'en was the worst of all. He seemed to be suffering terribly. Some of the others took care of him, until he suddenly said, in an eerie voice, "I worked for years to develop my powers. Everything was going smoothly until I had a spell of bad luck and ended up on this river. I asked Kung K'ai for help. Everybody had agreed to let me go, everybody but you. You refused to let me go, Ch'en 4, you refused to give me my life, you took your spear and drove it into my head and killed me! You have taken my life, and now I am going to take your life!"

The soldiers looked on in horror as Ch'en 4 threw back his head and died!

Some spirits develop their powers for many decades and even for many centuries. Among their other abilities, they achieve the power of transformation. Science does not recognize these abilities yet, but no matter what, there may be more to the animals around you than meets the eye!

THE SEAL IN THE RIVER



THE MURDERED CHICKEN



THE MURDERED CHICKEN

"He was truly a fine man. He was a pious Buddhist who lived by the commandments. And a pure vegetarian," said Li Szuwei, as he wiped away a tear.

"Yes, a model for all Buddhists," said his friend Luo Takuang.

They were talking about their old friend Chin Shihyen, who really had been every bit as good as they said. People for miles around knew that Chin Shihyen was 'a true Buddhist. They were all shocked and saddened when Chin died in his forties.

Chin came to one of his servants in a dream. "Hi, it's nice to see you again.

"Too bad I died so young. I really wanted to go to the Pure Land, but I didn't make it. I'm doing okay now. I can come and go as I please.

"Right now I'm kind of like on probation with Amitabha. I'm busy working up enough merit so I can go to the Pure Land.

"Tell my family not to worry about me. Okay? It was great talking to you."

They were all happy to hear about that, but some time later, Chin appeared in his widow's dream, and he was mad! "You dummy! Didn't I teach you anything? Now look what you've done! Are you trying to ruin me? How could you be so stupid?"

Mrs. Chin didn't know what was wrong. She had never seen her husband so angry before. "What did I do wrong?" She thought maybe he was mad that she had remarried.

"You slaughtered a chicken at my tomb when you got remarried! I think it's great you got remarried, I mean I don't want you to go lonely, but why on earth did you do in that chicken? Don't you realize how serious that is?"

His wife was sorry but honest. "No, really, I don't know how serious it is."

"Well, let me tell you, now I've got this probation officer who follows me everywhere to make sure I don't kill anything. It's like they think it was me who murdered that poor chicken. Now he's always sticking his nose in my business and telling me what I can do and what I can't do. You and your chicken!"

"I'm really sorry... Shihyen, you know I got remarried. I'm glad you don't mind. You know I'm going to have a baby, too?"

"Yeah, I know, it's a boy."

"A boy? How nice."

"This one'll be fine, but the next time..."

"The next time what?"

"The next time won't be so fine for you or the kid. Look, my probation officer's coming back, so I gotta run now, but listen, I expect you to stay a vegetarian. No more of these dead animals at my tomb, got that?"

Everything turned out as Chin had said in the dream.

Look what even one dead chicken can do to a soul after death. Then think what happens to the souls of people who eat chicken and pork and beef day after day!

BANDS OF RED

The great Confucian scholar Chi Hsiaolan (1724-1805) recorded this story.

A magnificent boat reached the shore. The people there were surprised to see at a window a middle-aged lady, dressed in the splendid attire of a member of an official household, crying her eyes out.

One of them whispered, "Isn't that the lady of His Honor?"

"Yes it is, but what could possibly happen to make someone in such an exalted position so sad?"

Her servants on the boat were trying to figure out the same thing. Finally, her old wet nurse got the story out of her. Her Ladyship had dreamed that her little daughter, who had died so young, had been tied up with red bands and was going to be killed. She cried to her mother to save her. It was so sad that Her Ladyship woke up with a start.

But the dream didn't seem to end there. She was awake, but she thought she could still hear her poor little daughter crying. The sound seemed to be coming from that boat over there.

The wet nurse went over to investigate. When she reached the other boat, the first thing she saw was a pool of blood!

A butcher was slaughtering a piglet there. The piglet screeched. When the wet nurse came on board, it struggled and twisted. It was a horrible sight. Its feet were tied with red bands, just like in Her Ladyship's dream!

It was too late to save that piglet, but Her Ladyship bought it anyway, and gave it a decent burial on the shore.

When it was all over, there was a lot of talk about this weird event.

It seems that His Honor's daughter had been sweet and intelligent. She had no bad habits to speak of, but she did love chicken. She couldn't eat a meal without at least one plate of chicken. In one year, at least seven or eight hundred chickens would meet their deaths in order to satisfy her appetite. By the time of her unfortunate death at the tender age of 16, she was responsible for the deaths of thousands of chickens.

Who can escape a blood debt that runs into the thousands?



THE HUNTER'S CONSCIENCE



THE HUNTER'S CONSCIENCE

Doctor Huang Hsioyuan of Hangchou was a noted authority on skin diseases and infections of all sorts.

One day he was sitting in his office when a man came in groaning. "What an ugly brute," the doctor couldn't help thinking, even though he knew that a doctor must do his best to help any person suffering, without regard to his looks.

The man took off his shirt and sat down so the doctor could see his back. On his back and shoulders, he had dozens of sores. The big ones were the size of a cup, and they were surrounded by lots of littler ones. The whole thing smelled dreadful.

Doctor Huang was so surprised that he said "Your whole back is rotting away" before he could catch himself.

"What?" the patient said, turning around in the chair.

"This is a rare disease called Birds Pay Homage to the King. It's incurable." Doctor Huang pushed his glasses up his nose. "What kind of business are you in? I think we'd better find this out first."

"You know those new weapons they call 'guns'? I have one, and I use it to shoot birds. I turn over their nests so they don't have anywhere to go, and then I shoot them when they're flying around. I've been in this line for oh, a dozen years now," the patient answered.

"No wonder!" the doctor replied. "Think how many homes you have destroyed, and how many animals you have killed! You have brought this disease down upon yourself by breaking the laws of nature."

The hunter looked worried. "Then what can I do?"

"If you're brave enough to admit that you shouldn't have killed all those helpless birds, and you promise that you will never kill anything again, we may have a chance. Otherwise..."

The hunter thought carefully. He realized that he had been cruel to shoot defenseless birds. He threw his gun in the river and went into the fresh produce business.

Within two weeks, his back was obviously better. He felt healthy, both physically and mentally. Before too much longer, he was well again.

By facing the truth and listening to his conscience, this man saved himself from a terrible end.

CHAO CH'UN AND RIVER TURTLE

Once a fisherman in Tant'u, Chiangsue caught a huge turtle. He wasn't quite sure what to do with it.

He pondered. "It's huge. It must be worth a lot of money. If anybody around here can afford to buy such a big turtle, it has to be Chao Ch'un, because he's the richest man in the county."

He put the turtle in a cart and took it to Chao. Chao took one look and said, "Turtle soup!" He gave the fisherman a good price for the turtle, and from then on, any fisherman who caught a turtle sold it to Chao. As a matter of fact, catching turtles to sell to Chao Ch'un became a local specialty.

After about a year of this, Chao dreamed that he was in the Temple of the Eastern Peak, arguing a case in front of a judge. The plaintiff was fat, with a triangular head. He called himself River Turtle. River Turtle told the divine Emperor of the Eastern Peak, "Chao Ch'un has killed too many of us. He should be called to accounts."

"Chao Ch'un!" The Emperor's voice rumbled like thunder. "What do you have to say in your defense?"

"Nothing. I just love to eat turtle meat, that's all. What harm can that do? I mean, it's not me that catches them."

The Emperor said, "The fishermen are uneducated, so they cannot be expected to understand the way in which killing innocent animals upsets the balance of the universe. You, however, are an educated man. You should know better. If you do not know, you will learn in Hell." The Emperor glared at Chao. River Turtle nodded.

"Will you mend your ways? We will give you a chance. If from this day hence, you do not kill or cause to be killed any cattle, pig, poultry, dog, turtle, or other animal, but do your utmost to teach others not to kill, you may atone for your crimes.

"Does the plaintiff have any comment?"

"Your Majesty," River Turtle begged, "Aren't you letting him off a bit too easy? Don't forget how many of my relatives are buried in his stomach."

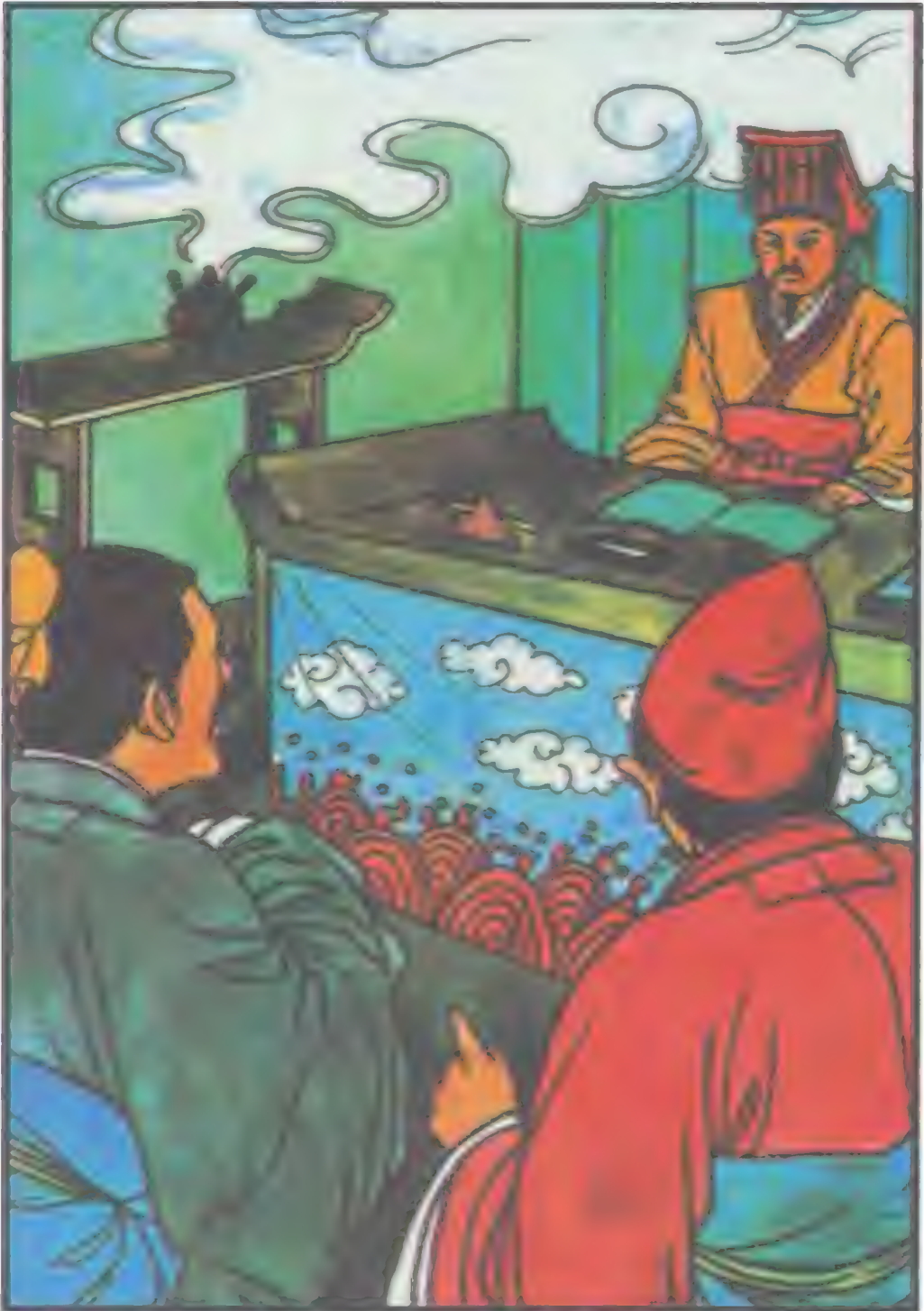
"Yes, it is meet and right that we discipline this man to express the indignation of all living creatures for his barbarous behavior. Bailiffs! Give this man ten strokes with the bamboo poles."

Six demons dragged Chao to the floor and held him there while two others beat him with bamboo poles.

When he got up, the Emperor said, "If a person has so much as one good thought, the gods and demons can bring him good fortune. Bad thoughts bring bad luck. If you change your ways, you can earn good luck. If you keep up your old habits, though, you will not be forgiven." Several demons led him out of the temple.

Chao woke up in his own bed. His bottom was bruised and swollen. He had to spend a week in bed before he could get up.

He told his whole family what happened to him. From that day, they all became vegetarians. They never ate another animal's carcass. They bought captured animals to set free. Before long, everybody agreed that the Chao had changed. Now they were not only the richest people around, but they were also the nicest.





OLD HSU'S KNEES

Old Hsu came to work at the Kao's as a servant when he was about 50. He worked hard and always did his duties quickly, without any complaining or backtalk. The Kao's thought a lot of him.

One day, though, the sun was already high in the sky, but Old Hsu was still in bed. He was usually the first up in the morning, so this was odd. Another servant went to his room to see what was the matter. First he knocked, then he pounded on the door. Finally, Old Hsu came out, limping. He seemed to be in pain.

"Something wrong with your legs?" the other servant asked.

"Look at this, my knees are all red and swollen. I must have boils," Old Hsu said, pulling up his pants.

He continued, "I had a weird dream last night. I saw thousands and thousands of eels. Two of the biggest ones came rushing at me and bit me in the knees. It hurt so much I woke up, and found I couldn't move. That's why it took me so long to answer the door."

Mr. Kao said, "That is an odd dream. Do you know what it's about?"

Old Hsu thought a bit. "When I was 20, I opened a noodle shop in Tungkuan. My eel noodles were famous. I killed dozens of eels every day to meet the demand.

"After thirty years, I had saved quite a bit of money, but I was getting pretty sick of cooking noodles day in and day out, so I decided to invest. I started hoarding stocks of oil to sell at high prices when supplies ran out, and everything was all set. Then a fire broke out in my warehouse and wiped me out. Thirty years of work burned out overnight! I didn't have anything left. That's why I came here to work as a servant.

"Do you think my dream might have anything to do with my knees, sir?" Old Hsu asked.

"That was just a dream. Don't worry, I have just the thing for you." Mr. Kao got out a certain ointment that was his family specialty, and rubbed it onto Old Hsu's knees. Before long, Old Hsu was up and walking around again. But a few days later, he got boils on his knees again.

This time Old Hsu couldn't even get up to open his door. They had to come in through the window. Old Hsu showed them his knees. The flesh was almost all rotted off his bones.

"I'm doomed," he sobbed. "They came for me again last night. It hurts! I can't stand this much longer."

Within a few days, Old Hsu had died of the pain.

HAPPY CRABS

Liang T'uian was a doctor who really wanted to relieve suffering, not only among human beings, but among all living creatures as well. He was a vegetarian, of course.

One fall, his friend Ch'i Feit'eh sent him two baskets of crabs, "to be washed down with liquor." Gourmets know that autumn crabs and liquor are an unbeatable combination. But Liang did a strange thing. He didn't take the crabs to the kitchen, he took them to the shore and let them go in the little stream near his house.

Another guest, who had come from Huchou, said, "You are really a nice man. You remind me of Chang Fengweng, from my humble hometown. For generations, he and his family have been vegetarians, and never killed anything.

"In reward for their kindness, many of the family have won high positions in the government, with power and fame.

"I predict that as a result of your kindness, one day in the future your esteemed son will reach a lofty position in the imperial service, just as the sons of the Chang family have."

Liang smiled and said, "Good deeds are something we're supposed to do, they are not something we do hoping for rewards. If I have ever done any good, it has not been with the hopes of gaining some rewards for myself or my family. Don't you think those crabs look happier there in the stream than they would boiling in a pot? That's reward enough for me."

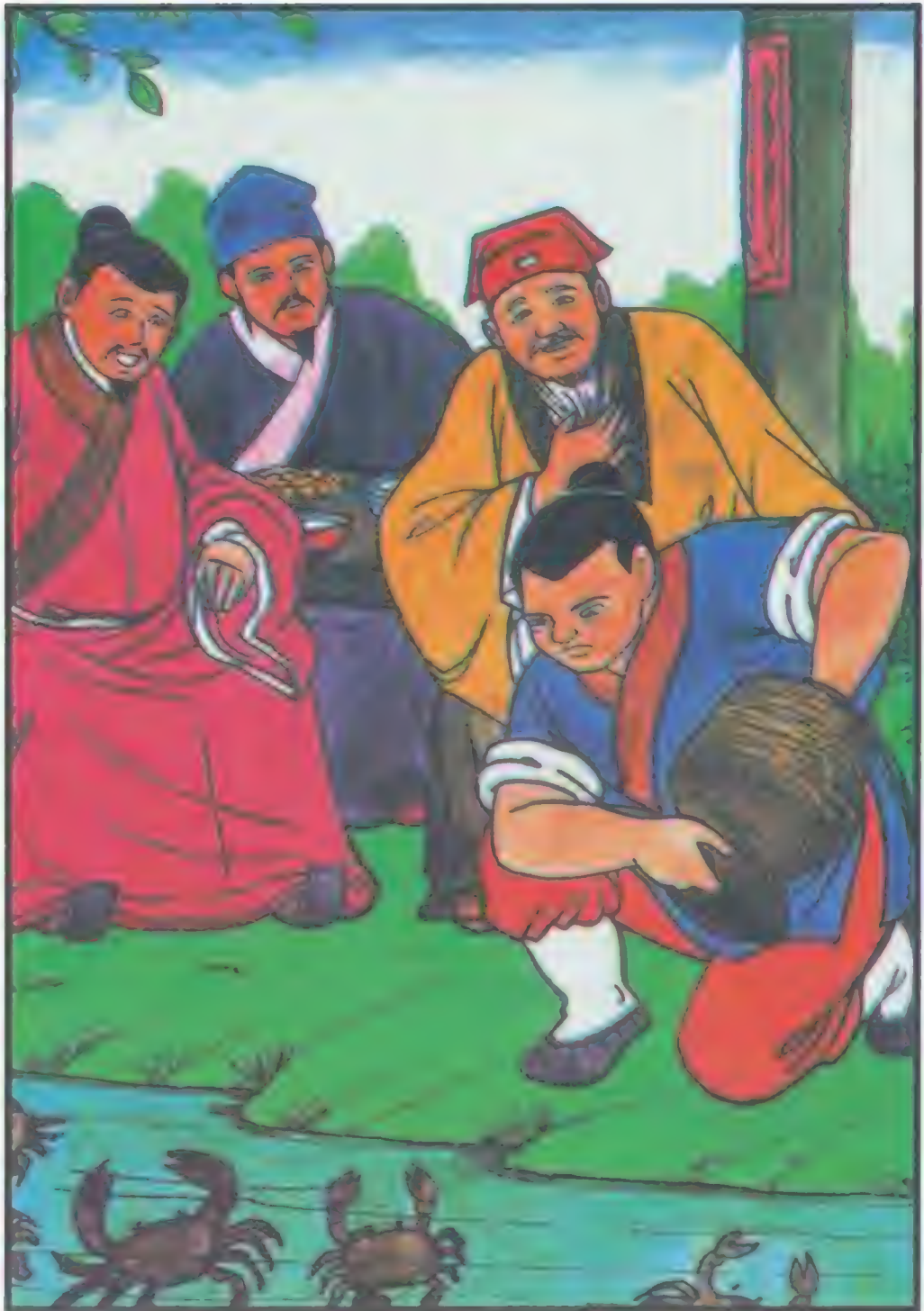
When Liang's son, Chich'ing, grew up, he passed the imperial examinations with flying colors, and was appointed to govern Kaochou. When he was sent to govern Min county, he was pleased to meet again his best friend, the scholar Chang, who was serving in the county government there. It turns out that this scholar was the son of Chang Fengweng, and was also a vegetarian.

Chang stayed at the Liang's for a month. He was delighted to see that no animal products were ever served at family meals. At formal dinners, almost all of the dishes were vegetarian. At most there might be some dried duck, but Chang noticed that his friend Liang Chich'ing never ate any of it.

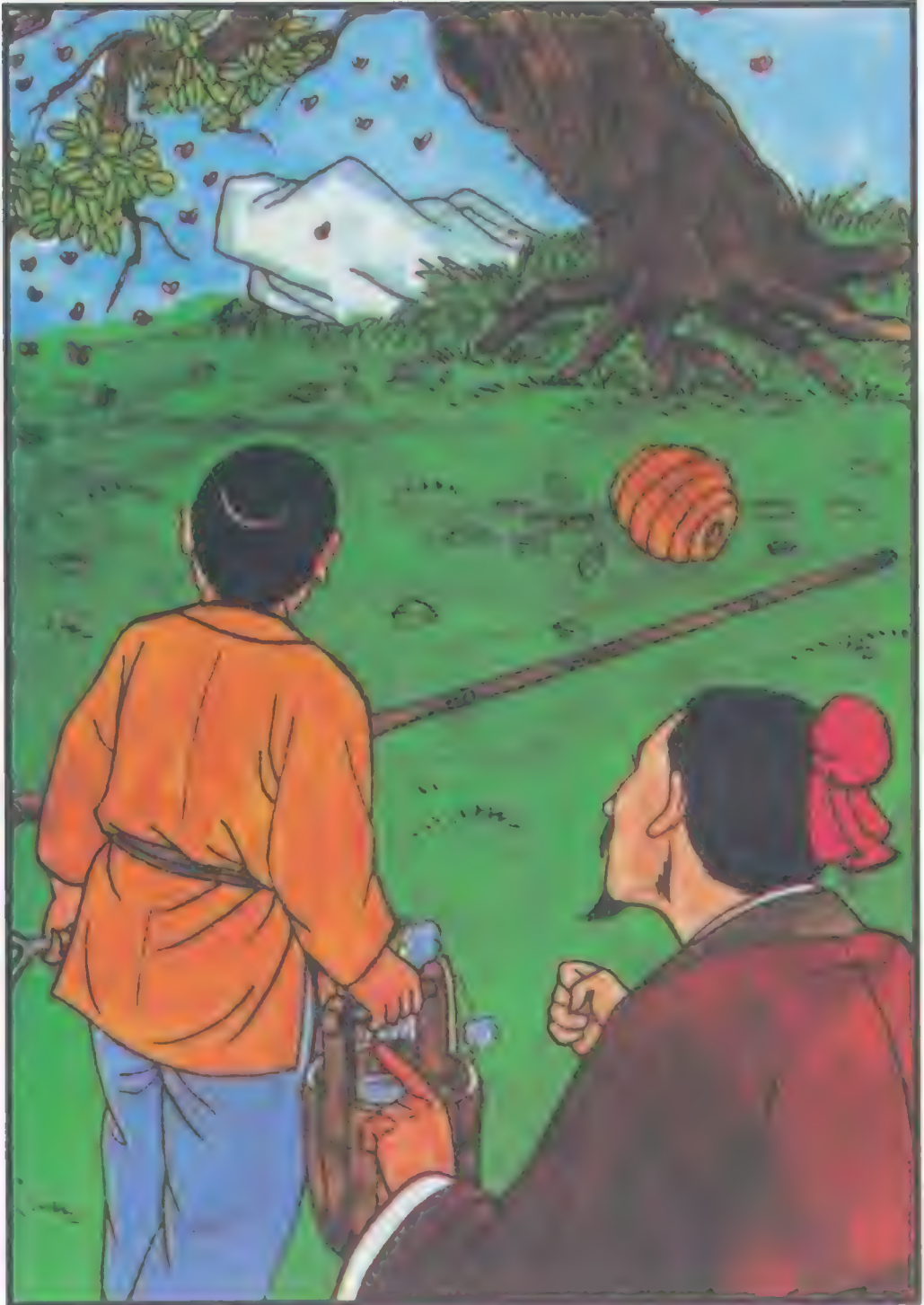
Liang was also impressed with his friend Chang. Chang was honest and hard-working. He lived simply and ate simply, too. He ate a light breakfast and got to the office early to begin his day. He never got to the office late, like some important officials did, and he never procrastinated on any official duties.

Think about that. If everybody were a vegetarian; if everybody ate simple foods; if everybody did his duty faithfully, without fuss, pomp, or corruption; if everybody were fair and honest: wouldn't that be a wonderful world to live in?

If you want to live in such a wonderful world, start building it yourself! You can't ask others to be kind and honest if you aren't first.



THE BEE'S KISS



THE BEE'S KISS

Lu Hsiao Cheng was a minor official in northwestern China during the first half of the seventh century, at the beginning of the T'ang dynasty, one of the great periods of Chinese history.

Unfortunately, Lu was a tightwad. He couldn't get along with others. He was mean and even cruel. If his servants did anything he didn't like, he would bawl them out and beat them. If he was like that to people, just think how he treated animals!

One day he noticed that the tree growing in his yard had a beehive in it. He was so stingy he didn't even want bees taking advantage of his tree. He told his servant to get rid of the hive, but the bees were buzzing busily around the hive, and the servant was afraid of getting stung.

That made Lu angry. He told his servant to boil up a bucket of water and pour it over the beehive. Hundreds of innocent bees were scalded to death.

That May was hot. Lu was taking a nap in the living room. He was sound asleep. Suddenly he leapt off the couch with a screech and rubbed his mouth. Something really hurt!

It turned out that a huge bee had gotten into the living room and stung Lu right on the mouth! His mouth swelled up. The pain was unbearable. He groaned and bellowed.

The servants came to see what was the matter. They got a doctor who put ointment on Lu's mouth, but it didn't work. The swelling got worse and worse and wouldn't go down. Lu couldn't even open his mouth to eat, much less to chew!

When the doctor saw that, he shook his head and said, "The poison may have gone into his heart."

The pain didn't go away. Lu got hungrier and hungrier, and weaker and weaker. He thought back and remembered the beehive he had wiped out. Maybe this was the result of his cruelty. Maybe. But by the time he thought about that, it was too late to do anything for him.

We have seen that some Chinese have numbers for names. Some of these are nicknames, but some are their real names. Earlier, we read about the stubborn hog butcher, Hsuan 4. Probably he was the fourth son in his family.

Now we are going to tell you about a gardener called Chio 46. What!? The forty-sixth son? Maybe. Or maybe his father just liked numbers.

Be that as it may, 46 was a very careful, very skilled gardener. He wasn't very highly educated, but he had a lot of experience gardening. Everybody praised his skill, but he had a problem. He wasn't very kind. Of course no gardener can help killing some insects now and then, but 46 seemed to enjoy doing in bugs, whether or not they were threatening his plants.

Once when he was working on his flowers, he saw an ant hole. It looked pretty deep. It was crawling with ants, running back and forth on their ant-errands.

"Just the right moment!" said 46. He had a big pot of water boiling in the kitchen. He had been going to make tea, but he thought this was better. He rushed into the kitchen and got a bucket and poured all the boiling water down the hole. Almost all the ants were scalded to death. 46 thought that was great fun!

All that running back and forth with the boiling water was hot work, especially on such a fine summer's day. 46 took off his shirt and went back to work, humming a happy tune.

What a fine day! The weather was perfect, and he had just finished off a whole nest of ants. His garden was doing well, so he would have lots of vegetables and flowers to sell in the market. He had saved up enough money by now to get married, and it was about time, too! He was over 30 already, and most of his buddies had troops of kids.

"Miss Chang 2 is the gal for me. She's got a charming face, and the sweetest, softest pair of little white hands I ever did see. If I marry her, we can have a bunch of kids. Wouldn't that be wonderful?"

"Her dad's a great friend of Pa's. I have enough money now to support a family, so I'll ask Pa to have a matchmaker arrange things."

The more 46 thought about it, the happier he was. Everything was perfect -- the only flaw on this perfect day was that he had an itchy little red dot on his shoulder. He scratched it, but it got itchier.

He kept working, but it still got itchier, and it seemed to be spreading. In a while, he had little red dots all over his upper body, and they itched so much he had to put down his tools and concentrate on his scratching.

The more he scratched, the itchier he got, and the more red dots he had. He rubbed his back against a tree while he scratched his chest and arms with his hands, and his legs with his feet.

They itched so much he scratched open his skin, and from every dot, out crawled an ant!

By the time this happened, 46 was half insane from the itching, and he died in torment a few days later.





GREED

His Honor Shen was famous for his generosity. He would rather die than dicker over prices. If his money wasn't spent wisely, well, what matter? Money is made to be spent, and one way is as good as another.

But, like so many Chinese, his favorite pastime was eating and feasting. As the old saying has it, he would eat "anything on two legs except Mom and Pop, anything on four legs except beds and chairs."

And speaking of beds! Have you ever seen a fancy Chinese bed? They are exquisitely carved, with a canopy on top. Shen's bed was fit for an emperor. He always dressed in the most expensive, most glamorous clothes. He always demanded the best quality for everything he used.

But eating was his main love. You name it, he ate it for breakfast, lunch, and dinner: duck's brains, bear paws, shark fin, camel's hump, ape lips, chicken, frogs, venison, and all sorts of rare, expensive delicacies. Over the years, the carcasses of thousands of dead animals went down Shen's throat.

After he retired, Shen bought a palatial mansion. In the gardens, there were ponds and streams, with pavilions to sit in. You couldn't tell for sure if you were on earth or in heaven! And it goes without saying that he hired the best chefs for his kitchen.

"How long can one person live?" Shen would ask his guests. "If you don't enjoy now, when will you? What would life be without delicacies from hill and sea on the table?"

"He'll get his some day," some people said. But Shen ignored them.

All those expenditures take a lot of money. Shen's fortune gradually dwindled, and Shen himself starting acting weird. He would eat anything he could stick in his mouth. Not just the dishes his chefs prepared, but also leaves and twigs, rocks, old shoes, litter, bird droppings, even teacups and platters went into his mouth. He would chew them up and swallow them. Before long, he had killed himself with his greed.

Isn't that a sad way to die?

A HAPPY MAN

One day in spring, Wang Liangpin called his servant to him.

"How many pounds of snails did you buy?"

"200 pounds, sir."

"Did you buy birds?"

"Yes, sir, over 60."

"Did you have enough money?"

"Yes, sir."

Wang never spent much money on himself. He was frugal and lived simply. He spent most of his money buying animals to set free.

On his birthday, his students wanted to give him a party. When he found out, he told them, "If you respect me, use the money for the party to buy animals to set free. That would be the best possible birthday gift you could get me."

His students were touched, and did as he said.

All in all, that year he released twice as many animals as usual.

A few years later, one of his neighbors had a water buffalo that was too old to work. He was going to sell it to a butcher. The buffalo must have known what was up, because it got away from its master and ran straight to Wang Liangpin. It knelt down in front of him, begging for its life.

Wang got together enough money to buy it, and took care of it for the rest of its life.

Children learn very quickly from their parents, even without being told. Wang was always kind to others, so his children learned to be kind, too. Wang always did all his work carefully, so his children did their schoolwork carefully. They obeyed their father and mother, and his son worked so hard that he won a very high position in the government, bringing honor and glory to the whole family.

Wang Liangpin lived a long, peaceful, happy life, and died without any pain or discomfort. When he died, he looked as calm and settled as a monk sitting down to meditate.





A TRIP TO HEAVEN

Ku Shuhchih was a vegetarian who lived in Ch'angshu, Chiangsu. He never ate animal products or the five unclean vegetables (garlic, leeks, onions, scallions, and asafetida). But one evening he went to bed and didn't wake up the next morning. His family was worried to death! He kept breathing (snoring, to tell the truth), so they knew he was alive, but he just kept on sleeping and sleeping! All in all, he slept for seven whole days!

"What happened?" they asked when he finally woke up.

"Hey, I was having a great time! When I went to sleep, I was groggy, but I thought I heard someone calling me. Guess who it was?"

"A tax collector?"

"No, not at all, it was Dharma Master Takuang, my favorite monk. He said, 'Mr. Ku, let's go listen to some real dharma preaching.' Of course I agreed, so we set out.

"We reached a huge temple. It was beautiful! You've never seen anything like it. I can't find words to describe how beautiful it was. When we got there, there was already a crowd listening to a sutra. In the front room they were preaching the Diamond Sutra. In the back room they were preaching the Gratitude Sutra.

"We went to listen to the Gratitude Sutra. When the monk finished, he reminded us not to kill anything, especially to eat. On the one hand, that way you can earn merit for your parents. On the other hand, you can reduce your own bad karma.

"Also, he said that vegetarians can concentrate on spiritual matters more easily, and can stick to their principles better than people who eat meat can.

"Then Master Takuang took me to this place. It was terrible! The first thing I saw was a pool of blood!

"Then I saw a woman lying in the pool of blood, crying and groaning. Her body was covered with snails and worms, and I think they were eating her.

"What's going on here?" I asked.

"Master Takuang explained, 'Because you are a vegetarian and have done many good deeds, your mother in this life has been saved. But this is your mother from one of your past lives. She used to love to eat ducks. This is what she got for that. You can save her, too. Recite the Great Mercy Mantra and the Pure Land Mantra, and she will be released from this suffering.

"And then Master Takuang brought me back. I had no idea I was gone so long!"

Ku got to work on the Great Mercy Mantra of Kuanyin Bodhisattva and the Pure Land Mantra of Amitabha.

If you would like to learn them, you can ask any monk or nun to teach you. The Great Mercy Mantra is pretty long, but the Pure Land Mantra is shorter.

If they are both too long for you, or if you can't find anyone to teach you, you can just recite Kuanyin Bodhisattva or Amitabha. That's just as good.

And if you can be a pure vegetarian like Ku, that's even better!

ANOTHER CHANCE

In the dim light, a sick man could be seen twisting and turning on a clean bed. He was groaning and clutching the left side of his stomach. "It hurts! It hurts!"

His family heard him groaning and then mumbling, but they couldn't tell what he was saying. The sick man felt himself leave his bed. He wasn't walking, though, he seemed to be flying up through the air! He couldn't tell what was lifting him, but higher and higher he went. He began to feel scared.

Before long, he reached a dark and somber palace. The palace guards looked like demons. When they saw the sick man approach, they rushed up and herded him into the palace. The sick man realized that he was in the Court of the Other World!

There he saw a very powerful-looking man wearing a crown. He was awe-inspiring, and the sick man seemed to be in fear of him, without knowing why. By the majestic man's side was a judge.

The man in the crown spoke. His voice seemed to rumble like thunder rolling down a mountainside. "You know that it is time for your life to end, do you not? You also know that your grandfather died of the same illness of the spleen, do you not?"

The sick man was too full of dread to answer.

"Meng Chaohsiang!" The sick man started when he heard his name. "When your grandfather was alive, he killed many animals, and brought his fate down upon himself. You have done some good deeds, and We believe that you can learn to mend your ways, so We are willing to give you a chance.

"We will give you some more years to live, to see how you do. Mark Our words! Kill nothing, that you may not be killed. Let living creatures go free, as We have let you go free this day.

"Tell all people what you have seen here this day, that they might know the price of the crime of killing, and that they, too, might mend their ways. In this way, you may balance out some of your past misdeeds. Do you understand?"

Meng could only nod numbly. He seemed to go into a cloud, and gradually found himself in bed with his family around him. His spleen didn't hurt anymore. His family was amazed to see him get right out of bed and go straight to the statue of the Buddha. There he swore never to kill again.

He kept his promise. He wrote down what had happened to him, and printed a booklet for everyone to read.

His life did not end then. He lived much longer. By the time he died of old age, he had become a famous official.





A WISE MAN'S WORDS

Bandits had struck again in Fuyang! This time they robbed a dozen people. Then they chopped off their heads and their hands. All the people were frightened by such savagery.

There were floods in Hsiangyang. Hundreds of houses disappeared under the water overnight. The inhabitants lost everything, and had no place to go. But they were the lucky ones, the ones who were not drowned immediately or carried off in the raging flood waters.

As a local official, Li Peiteh felt he had to do something about the tragedies that struck the people under his jurisdiction. As a kind man, he felt sorry for all those unlucky people. As a Taoist, he wondered what might be the cause behind all these disasters.

"If anybody would know, it would be my Teacher, the great sorcerer Lin." When he got a chance, Li went to the Erh-hsien Temple to visit his Teacher. When he got there, the sorcerer was sitting in meditation, exercising his powers.

When Li came in, the sorcerer welcomed him. Li asked, "Teacher, I would like to ask the cause behind all the disasters which have befallen our unhappy district of late. Bandits have come like a swarm of angry hornets. They kill and burn. Floods have destroyed the fruits of many years of hard work. Teacher, tell me why."

"I rarely leave this temple," said the Teacher. "I do not follow current events."

"But why should these people be subjected to these terrible occurrences?"

The sorcerer heaved a deep sigh. "You reap as you sow. People are selfish and cruel. They only think about their own stomachs, so they kill animals to eat their meat.

"The killed animals are wrathful. When much wrath accumulates, the peace of nature is disturbed, so the heavens break open and waters flood the land. Some of the animals come back in rebirth as human beings, and murder and rob as vengeance for misdeeds done unto them.

"There is no escaping the power of nature. People who have done wrong bring misfortune down upon themselves and upon their families. Those who go against nature bring themselves tragedy."

Although this story dates back hundreds of years, it is especially important for us now, at the end of the twentieth century. Florida is struck by hurricanes and tornadoes. California is shaken by earthquakes, parched by drought, and then drenched by storms. Windstorms and snowstorms destroy property and leave thousands homeless across the nation.

We should listen to the wisdom of the ancients and see how we fly in the face of nature. Killing, violence, drug abuse, homosexuality, unsettling music, alcoholism, lurid journalism, and promiscuity are modern people's entertainment. Is it any wonder that nature can barely tolerate us any more?

THE TADPOLES' GRATITUDE

Chang Tsochih was a county official in Shaohsing, Chekiang. One day he went out on a tour of inspection. He was passing through some rice paddies, when suddenly thousands and thousands of tadpoles rushed to the side of the road. They wriggled and squirmed. They lifted their heads to look at Chang.

"How odd! It seems like they're pleading for something," Chang said to his secretary.

"Yes, you can practically hear them weeping and wailing."

Chang decided to investigate. He got out of his sedan chair. The tadpoles got excited, and started swimming in a certain direction, stopping every few feet to look back, just like a dog trying to lead a person on!

"Stranger and stranger," Chang thought as he splashed through the paddy after them. Then he stopped with a gasp. Three corpses were lying in the water in the center of the field!

Chang pulled out his sword. There was nobody in sight but his retinue. He looked at the corpses.

"Look, sir!" cried his secretary, "One of them is still alive!"

Chang was a powerful man. Without waiting for help, he pulled away the two corpses and dragged the third man to the side of the field. He was still breathing, and his heart was beating weakly.

"We got here just in time. Much later, and he'd be dead."

Chang immediately called for some hot broth. Before long, the man revived. He thanked Chang profusely, but Chang was more interested in finding out what had happened.

"I run a little store," the victim told him. "I was on my way back from collecting a bill. I saw two men in front of me heading for the market: these guys here. I asked them what they had to sell, and they said they had fresh tadpoles. Some people like to eat those, as Your Honor knows.

"But, Your Honor, I'm a Buddhist, and I don't believe in killing animals to eat. I always like to set animals free. I had just collected a bunch of money. So I made a deal with those guys. I asked them to sell me their tadpoles and I would set them free.

"They said, 'Okay, but the water here is shallow. If you let them go here, somebody else'll just catch them again. There's a pond over there in that grove, let's go set them free there.'

"But we didn't realize that two bandits had seen me collect the money, and they were following me. Before we could get to the pond, they attacked us with hatchets, and that's the last thing I know, Your Honor."

Chang said, "They must have killed the other two men so there wouldn't be any witnesses. When did this happen?"

"Not long ago, Your Honor."

"Then they can't be far!" Chang sent out his men, and in a short time, the bandits were caught. Chang returned the money to the businessman, and the bandits were charged with robbery and murder.

Chang never forgot that even a tadpole loves its life, and can show gratitude!

THE TADPOLES' GRATITUDE



SPARE AN OLD HEN



SPARE AN OLD HEN

It was a happy gathering. The host told Lien Yuch'eng, "I'm overjoyed you could come, and from such a distance! I'll spread out an extra special feast for this occasion."

Lien said, "You don't have to go to so much trouble for a relative. It's not like I was an imperial official or something."

Another relative said, "We've got a nice, fat hen ready for the knife. We'll butcher her tomorrow morning and eat her for lunch tomorrow."

Lien didn't like big fancy meals in the first place, and in the second place, he felt sorry for the hen, so he thought up an excuse. "I eat only vegetarian food on certain days, and tomorrow is my vegetarian day, so I have to ask you not to kill that hen for me. Your sincerity fills my heart better than a hen could fill my stomach."

"Well, if you insist. Then we'll all eat vegetarian food tomorrow," his relative said.

Then, all too early, it was time for Lien Yuch'eng to end his visit and go home. On his way back, he got to a wide river and waited for the ferry.

Little did he imagine that as soon as he got on the ferry, an old man with a white beard on the shore pointed at him and shouted, "There's a liar on board! Somebody said he's a vegetarian, but he's no such thing at all! Don't take him across the river on your ferry!"

With that, the people on the boat started asking who the culprit was. Finally, Lien confessed. "I told a white lie, but I didn't do it to hurt anybody." The other people didn't care what reason he gave, they didn't want him on board any more, so pushing and pulling, they got him off the ferry, and threw his luggage on the shore after him. Then they cast off.

Lien was pretty mad. He decided to find that old guy and ask who told him to butt into Lien's business. But the funny thing was that he couldn't find the old guy, so he just sat on the shore with his luggage watching the ferry get smaller and smaller as it crossed the river.

But then suddenly a terrible storm came up. The wind blew so mightily that before they could cross to the other side, the ferry went down with all hands. Not a single person on the ferry survived.

Lien never knew that when he spared that old hen, he was saving his own life!

TURTLE MAIL

During the 1850's, there was a lot of unrest in Taiwan, so the Emperor sent Hsu Shujen with soldiers to calm everything down. T'ang Yi-an was sent along with him. T'ang was anxious to find out how things were with his little brother, T'ang Shengan, who was leading troops in Hsiamen, across the Taiwan Strait on the mainland. But communications in those days were poor at best, and during wartime, it was almost impossible to get letters through.

One day four coolies came with a huge sea turtle for sale. It was gigantic, and the price they were asking was, also. T'ang's subordinate Chang thought of buying it, but balked at the price they asked.

The coolies asked Mrs. T'ang, but she thought the price was too high, too. Just as the coolies were about to take it away, Mrs. T'ang saw the turtle looking at her with a sad expression in its eyes. It was crying. She felt sorry for it, so even though the price was high, she bought it. She talked it over with her husband, and he decided to set it free in the ocean the next day.

The turtle was so huge that it took four coolies to bring it in, but when T'ang happened to move it the next morning, he found it was so light that he could carry it himself.

'This is no ordinary turtle,' he thought. Silently, he sent a message to the turtle. 'I believe that you must be a supernatural turtle. Whether or not you are, I am going to set you free in the ocean today, the eighth of September. If you do have powers, I would appreciate it very much if you could have my brother, T'ang Shengan, now leading troops in Hsiamen, write a letter to me. Have you got that?'

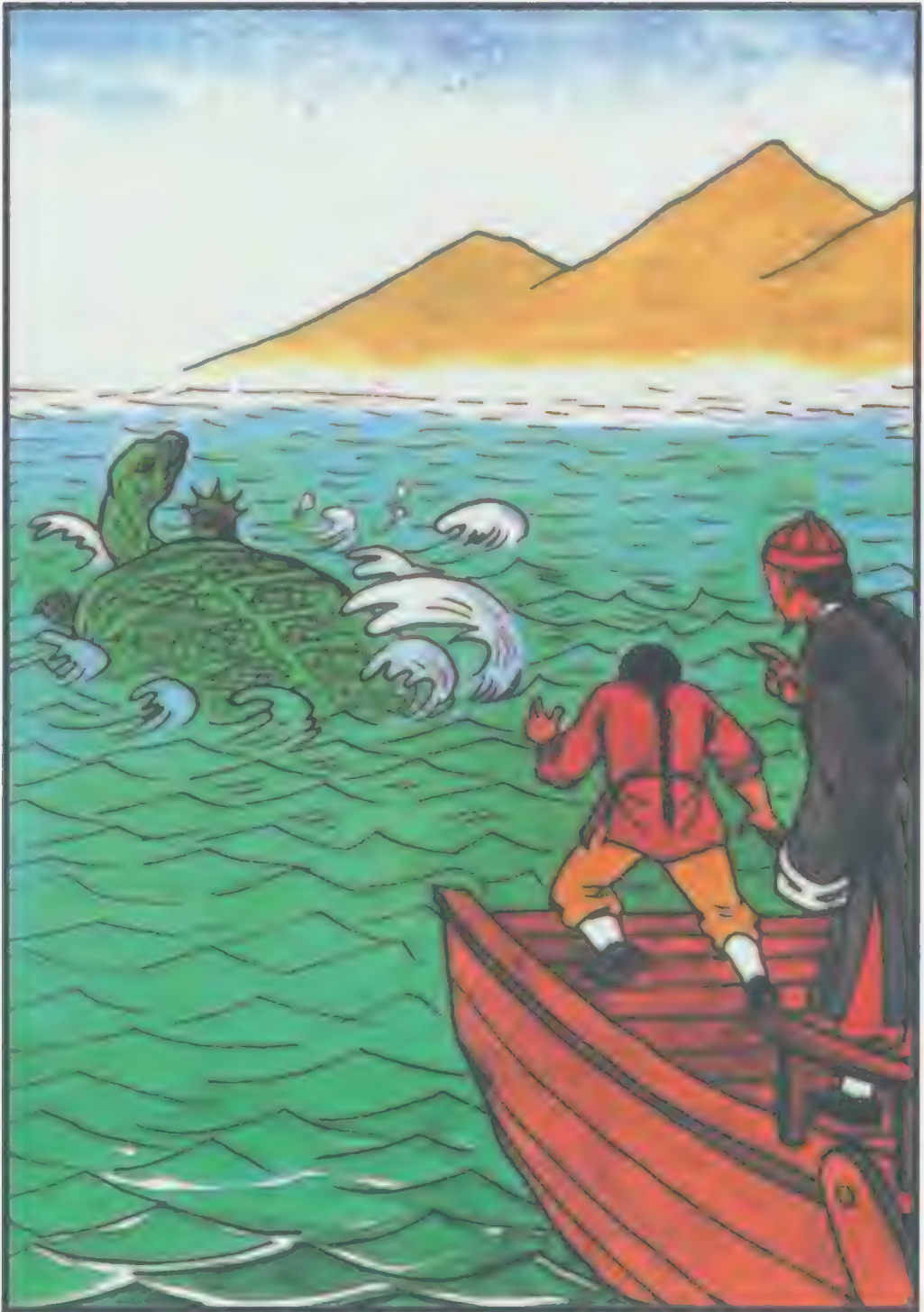
Then he set the turtle free. It seemed happy to be back in the water! It frolicked in the waves. As it swam away, it looked back over its shoulder and nodded at T'ang three times. It seemed to be saying Thank you.

A month later, a letter came from T'ang Shengan, saying that everything was all right. The letter was dated September 8.

Could it be a coincidence? Or had the turtle understood Yi-an's telepathic message and somehow passed it on to Shengan? Perhaps this was how the turtle expressed its gratitude for its life.

The T'ang brothers had done their country a great service during those troubled times, but they had had enough of fighting and military glory. They retired to lead quiet lives in the country. They often told their neighbors this story, to remind people that animals love their lives, and that by helping animals, sometimes you can help yourself, too.

TURTLE MAIL



A CLOSE CALL



A CLOSE CALL

"This is bizarre," Yin Anjen asked his family, "Who on earth killed my donkey?"

"What?"

"Yeah, somebody killed my donkey and left the skin in the yard." They went out to look.

"Looks like somebody ate the meat and left the hide." They were all pretty angry. It had been a nice donkey.

A year or two after this strange event, somebody accosted Yin on the street and said, "Your time is up. The soul-catchers will collect you tomorrow." And then the person disappeared in thin air.

Yin was covered with goosebumps. He went straight to Ts'umen Temple, where he knew some of the monks, and sat down in the chapel. He didn't go home that night, but spent his time kowtowing, telling the Buddha Amitabha's name, and reciting sutras.

Sure enough, the next morning he saw a dozen demons coming with spears and halberds and swords to fetch him. They stood outside the temple and roared, "Get out here as quick as you can!" Yin ignored them, and kept reciting his sutra.

"I told you we should have got him yesterday. Now he's in there reciting a sutra and there's not a thing we can do." Yin's hair stood on end when he heard that. He buried his nose in the sutra. The demons went into a huddle. Then they left to fetch other souls, but they stationed one demon at the door to catch Yin if he stepped outside.

Soon that sentry said, "Look, why don't you come along peacefully without any fuss? It'll be easier for us all around. We don't have anything against you personally. We're just doing our job.

"The problem is that the donkey you murdered has filed a suit against you, so we have to take you in. Sorry, man, but that's the way it has to be."

"You can ask my family!" Yin said. "I didn't kill that donkey at all! Somebody else did, and left the skin in my yard. I'm innocent!"

"Tell it to the judge."

"Look, let's do it this way. I'll recite sutras and hold ceremonies for the soul of my old donkey, but I can't do that if I'm dead, can I? Could you go ask the donkey if that's okay?"

"All right, I'll go see what I can do. But if the donkey doesn't buy that, we'll be back for you tomorrow, with a warrant, so it won't do you any good to hide in here. If we don't come for you tomorrow, that means it's a deal." The demon disappeared in a puff of smoke.

The next day Yin was on pins and needles all day, but the demons didn't show up. Yin recited sutras for the dead donkey's soul, and performed ceremonies to release it from its suffering.

But even better than that, Yin learned an important lesson. He learned that all living creatures love their lives. From then on, he and his entire family never ate another bite of meat.

C

THE BEST GIFT POSSIBLE

Chapter 12 of the Wise-Stupid (Damamuka-nidana) Sutra tells that while our Buddha, Sakyamuni, was in Sravasti, a monk was practicing meditation in a forest nearby. There he also recited sutras. He had a beautiful voice, so when he chanted sutras, even the birds liked to listen to him.

There was one bird in particular that came whenever the monk chanted sutras. It would perch on a branch near by and listen carefully.

One day while it was absorbed in the sutra, a hunter killed that little bird.

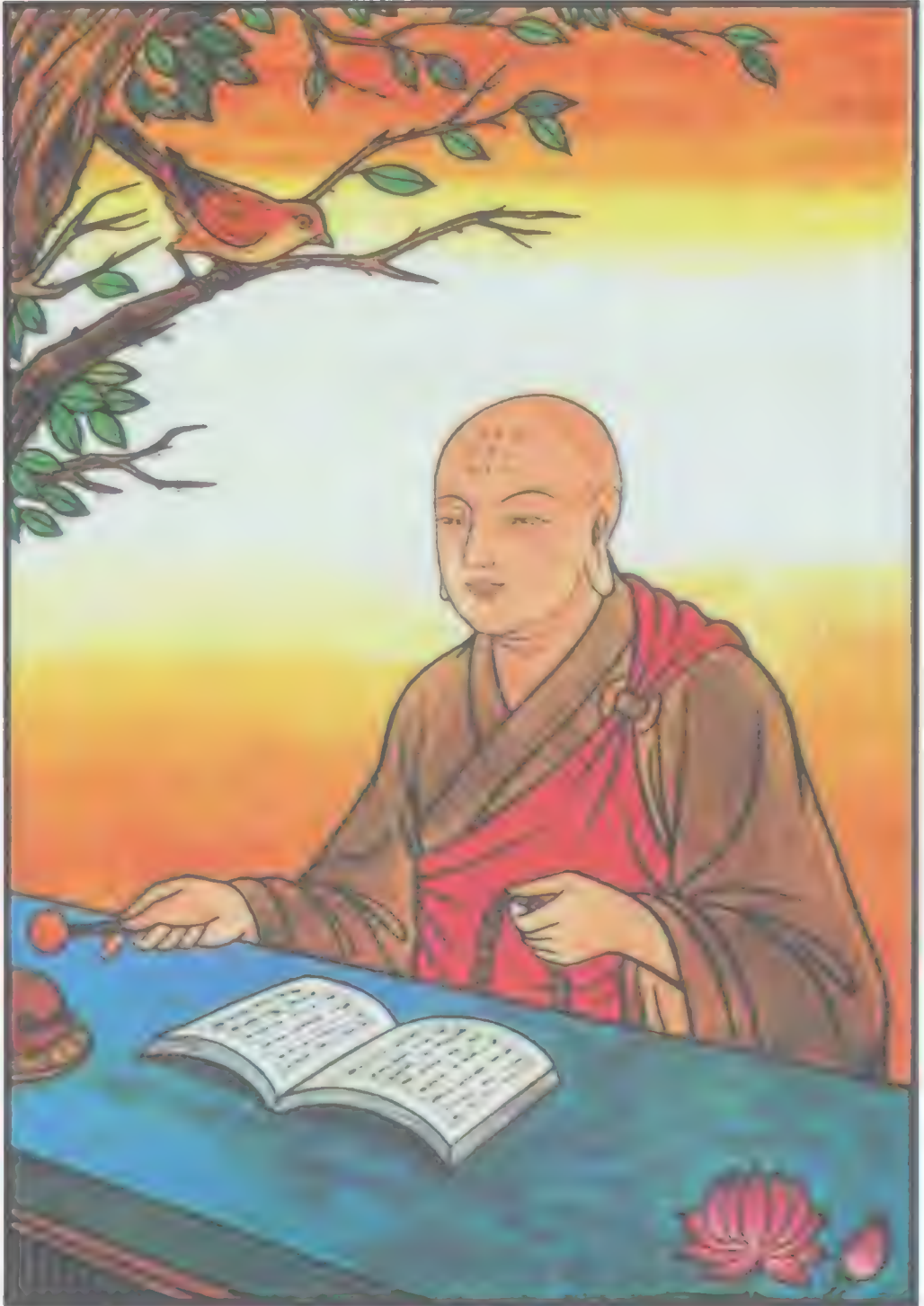
But because it had paid such careful attention to the sutra, after death its soul went to the palace in Trayastrimsas, one of the heavens, where it was reborn as a glorious heavenly being. He had the power to see into past lives. When he realized why he had been reborn in heaven, he brought divine flowers and scattered them about the monk reciting sutras in the forest. Then he kowtowed to the monk, to show his reverence and gratitude.

The monk was surprised to see a heavenly being showing such respect to a mere mortal, and asked the reason. When he found out that this was his little listener, the monk was happy for him. He gave him the best gift possible, the gift of wisdom. He told the bird who had become a heavenly being about the truth of the universe, or what we call the Buddhist dharma.

The heavenly being was overjoyed with such a fine present. With his new wisdom, he made quick progress, and went back to heaven to continue his studies.

AMITABHA

THE BEST GIFT POSSIBLE



IN CLOSING

We hope you have enjoyed these stories. Some of them are very old -- Ch'eng T'ang in the third story lived over three thousand years ago. Here you have read about places you may never heard of before, and ideas you never thought of. You may be thinking, "Who on earth is the Dragon King?" Many of these stories are well known to most Chinese, but may seem very far away from you.

Perhaps once you saved a chick that fell out of its nest. After you read this book, you may wonder, how come I didn't get a reward?

Notice that the rewards earned by the kind people in this book have generally been the most important things in life: wisdom, knowledge, good health, happiness. You probably aren't going to discover a gold mine because of that beetle you didn't step on, but look at it this way.

Most of these stories you have read here have never been told in English before. The West does not have this way of thinking. You have had the rare opportunity to read this book. You, out of all the millions of people in the country. This in itself is a wonderful chance, perhaps your reward for that good deed. Make good use of this.

But perhaps you have never rescued any animals in distress. You may be wondering, "What can I do to save lives?"

First, of course, you know you should never kill any animal. Fishing and hunting are terrible sports, and they bring disaster down on yourself and your loved ones. Don't kill animals for fun.

Don't kill animals for food, either. By nature, human beings are designed to be vegetarians. The number one killer in the United States is heart disease. The National Heart, Blood, and Lung Institute found that in 1989, Americans spent \$151 billion dollars treating heart disease! And it's a proven medical fact that eating meat causes heart disease. Not just red meat. Meat.

The US Surgeon General reports that 68% of diseases in the country are related to diet.

Of every seven dollars spent in the USA, one is spent on medical care.

Whew! That's a lot of numbers. Let's spell it out clearly.

Most sickness in the US today comes from what you eat. (Let's face it, that means eating meat, fish, eggs, milk, butter, and cheese ruin your health.)

If you get sick, you have to spend a lot of money.

If you don't get sick, you don't have to spend a lot of money -- you save the money and... Hey! That means

- * if you say NO to a hamburger and spare a cow's life;

- * if you say NO to a pork chop and spare a pig's life;

- * if you say NO to a drumstick and spare a chicken's life, you really *do* get a reward, in cash!

You get to keep all the money meat-eating people have to give to doctors! (Are doctors expensive? Ask Mom and Dad.)

Okay, you want facts and figures. Economists estimate that the average American family of three, eating healthful vegetarian food, can expect to save some \$4,000 a year in the short run, and more in the long run.

Now add that up, year after year after year...

That's a fortune!

And let's not just talk about the money. Do you *enjoy* being sick? It's painful. Even a stomachache that goes away before evening is painful.

Of all sicknesses, what is most painful? Probably cancer.

Every *year*, more Americans die of cancer than died in World War II, the Korean War, and the Viet Nam War combined!

And one of the main causes of cancer is eating animal products.

Simple. Eat less meat, get less cancer, suffer less.

Heart disease and cancer are not the only problems. The list of illnesses you can cause yourself by eating dead animals, eggs, and dairy products is long and horrifying. But that's only half the story. That's only the human suffering.

What about all those poor animals being slaughtered to provide us with the ingredients for all this bad health? Do you think *they* enjoy it?

The stories in this book took place long ago, in Asia. The animals suffered enormously while they were being murdered, but at least, in those days, they were raised pretty humanely. Pigs were stuck in filthy sties, but at least they had some space. Cattle lived outdoors most of the day and worked hard, but the farmers did, too. Chicks were allowed to scabble in the dirt with the hens.

Some of the methods used to transport them to the market were pretty crude, but all in all, the animals didn't suffer *too* much while they were growing.

Times have changed. Do you have any idea of what goes on in modern meat production? Torture!

Now, pigs, cows, and poultry are trapped in the smallest space possible and fed unnatural foods. Babies are taken away from their mothers. Many of them never have space to move around. They never see sunlight. They are pumped full of powerful chemicals to make them fat. The whole way of raising these innocent animals is cruel and heartless.

The most hard-hearted person wouldn't want to touch a piece of meat if he knew even half of the suffering animals go through to produce meat in the United States -- even before being butchered.

There are many other problems with eating animal products, too.

Have you heard about all those miserable people starving to death in other parts of the world? Some people say, too bad, but there's just not enough food to go around.

That's not true. Farmers today produce more than enough food to feed every single person on earth today. Then why do some people go hungry? Because so much of the food farmers produce has to go to feed cattle and pigs and poultry to produce meat.

Meat producers raise billions of animals. Those animals have to eat too, right? If meat producers buy up crops to feed to animals, poor people don't have any food to eat.

If the people of the United States ate only ten per cent less meat, there would be enough extra food to save all of the starving people in the world today.

Fifteen total vegetarians can be feed on the amount of land it takes to feed one person eating a meat based diet. In other words, when you eat meat, you are causing fourteen people to go hungry.

Another problem is that the way they produce meat today ruins the ecosystem. If the ecosystem is ruined, we are all dead.

When you think how much better off we all would be eating grains and vegetables, you probably realize it's not worth it to torture and kill animals.

But hunting and eating meat are not the only ways people kill animals.

Nothing can be more irritating than a mosquito buzzing around your ear at night. Smack! I got it!

What could be more disgusting than a cockroach crawling across the floor? Oooogh! I stepped on it!

What were those bugs doing inside in the first place? Giving you a message. A cockroach is a messenger telling you your house isn't clean enough. If you don't want cockroaches, tidy your house, and they won't bother you.

A mosquito is another messenger, reminding you to keep your screens shut tight.

I know what to do with those messengers! I'll *spray* them with my trusty insect spray, so *they*'ll know who's boss around this place!

Spraying may get rid of those pests today, but in the long run, who suffers? You do. I do. We all do.

To kill insects, pesticides obviously have to be powerful poisons. Manufacturing those poisons contaminates the environment. Once the poisons have been released from the can, they stay around and create health problems.

For every dollar's worth of pesticide you spray, about seven dollars have to be spent to fix up the damage to human health and the environment.

So let's not talk about gods appearing in dreams hundreds of years ago in faraway China. Let's talk about right here, right now.

* If you eat dead animals' bodies, you are going to suffer: cancer, heart disease, kidney problems, and dozens of other sicknesses. Take your pick.

* If you eat dead animals' bodies, you're going to have to spend a lot of money on doctors and medicine.

* If you eat meat, or fish, or eggs, or dairy products, you're making a lot of animals suffer.

* If you eat meat, you're hogging food supplies and starving hungry people.

* If you eat meat or spray bugs, you're helping to destroy the environment we depend on for survival.

Does that make sense? You should be able to accept these facts, even without a deeper discussion about the balance of the universe, or the universal laws we call the dharma.

Killing animals is a crime against nature.

"Lions and tigers kill things every day, don't they? Then killing's natural, isn't it?"

Well, yes, but if you've never done this before, this might not be a bad time for you to examine yourself. Do you have a tail like a lion? Do you have stripes like a tiger? Do you have big, sharp fangs and vicious claws?

No. What *do* you have? Intelligence, a lot of intelligence, so you can speak and read and write and reason, instead of just biting and scratching. You're supposed to use that intelligence to develop wisdom.

If you look carefully at the history of the human race, you can see very clearly that we use our mental strength more and more and our physical strength less and less.

If people thousands of years ago wanted to move a big boulder, they had

to get a group together, and it was Yo-Heave- *HO!* until they managed to budge it.

Later, when people had learned some basic physics, the boulder could be moved by one person who knew how to use a lever. But it still took a lot of grunting and sweating.

Now, if we want to move that boulder, we have machines. If you know which buttons to push, you can move that boulder without using very much muscle power at all.

This is because we use our minds, not just our bodies.

In other words, our minds are getting more and more capable. This is good, but it's not enough. The end result of millions of years of struggling and evolution is not to spend our lifetimes digging stones or watching television or playing games.

We are not wild beasts in the jungle any more, we are civilized, and we are supposed to act that way. As you grow up, you're supposed to outgrow your baby toys and tantrums; as the human race develops, we should leave behind our savage ways and develop our minds.

Somebody says, "Yeah, but a lion is a big, strong, powerful animal. Isn't that great?"

Is a lion very powerful? Have you ever heard of a lion that could roar as loud as a loudspeaker, run as far as a train, cut as deeply as a power saw, or strike as powerfully as a wrecking ball? These powerful tools are all the products of our intelligence. Human intelligence is more powerful than animal strength.

We respect lions and tigers and porpoises and dogs and all animals. We honor their right to live, we esteem their contributions to the ecosystem, and we are full of compassion for them.

A lion may have a strong body, and it may be very clever, but the tragedy of being a lion, or any animal, is that they are stupid. Oh, sure, they can communicate with one another, and they can be trained to do tricks, but they cannot think very much, and they cannot concentrate, so they can never realize what the universe is all about.

This is the vitally important mission for human beings, with our greater intelligence. We have to learn what we are, where we are, who we are. If we don't even know that, all our inventions and cities and monuments and science are meaningless.

If we do not know where we are, what we are, and who we are, we cannot understand ourselves. We have to understand ourselves in order to realize what the universe is all about. Only then can we free ourselves from suffering.

If you cannot understand yourself, you have to go through the cycle of living and dying and living and dying until you've got things straight. Life is full of so much suffering that sometimes we're too numb to even realize things could be better. The way to make things better is to build enough wisdom to realize what the universe is all about, and get out of the cycle of life and death.

No animal can think hard enough to do that, and not even many people can. If you want to realize what the universe is all about, you have to work very hard to develop wisdom. Wisdom is the road to freedom. Freedom means freedom from suffering. To build wisdom, the first thing you have to do is stop making obstacles for yourself.

To build wisdom, you need a strong body and a good mind.

Remember the last time you were sick? You couldn't go to school, because you can't concentrate on your schoolwork when your body is sick. By the same token, if your body is not healthy, your mind will not be keen. A strong and healthy body is the basis for a strong and healthy mind.

Exercise builds a strong and healthy body, but the fuel you put in your body is especially important.

If you load your body down with dead animals, you're ruining your health. If you want to be healthy, you have to be a vegetarian.

Another problem is that if you eat animals, you are breaking natural laws, and in the end you have to pay those animals back. It is easier not to break those laws in the first place, so you do not put a bunch of obstacles in your own path.

But no matter how hard you work, it's more difficult to free yourself from suffering than it is to swim across the Pacific Ocean.

That is why the Buddha Amitabha felt sorry for us and created the Pure Land, or Western Paradise. In his Pure Land, you can build wisdom without the suffering that is so common on earth. If you ask to get in, Amitabha will take you there and train you so that you can become a Buddha, too.

If you want to go there, recite Amitabha with all your heart and mind. When the time is right, he will come for you.

Once you get there, you will be free from life and death. You will be able to study and learn. Then one day you can come back and help all the suffering creatures so they can become Buddhas, too.

So here is our wish for you.

We wish you happiness,

We wish you health, and

We wish you wisdom!

GOOD-BYE!

A M I T A B H A

The Teachings Of Great Master Yin Guang

Whether one is a layperson or has left the home-life, one should respect elders and be harmonious to those surrounding him. One should endure what others cannot, and practice what others cannot achieve. One should take others' difficulties unto oneself and help them succeed in their undertakings. While sitting quietly, one should often reflect upon one's own faults, and when chatting with friends, one should not discuss the rights and wrongs of others. In every action one makes, whether dressing or eating, from dawn to dusk and dusk till dawn, one should not cease to recite the AMITABHA Buddha's name. Aside from Buddha recitation, whether reciting quietly or silently, one should not give rise to other improper thoughts. If wandering thoughts appear, one should immediately dismiss them. Constantly maintain a humble and repentful heart; even if one has upheld true cultivation, one should still feel one's practice is shallow and never boast. One should mind one's own business and not the business of others. Only look after the good examples of others instead of bad ones. One should see oneself as mundane and everyone else as Bodhisattvas. If one can cultivate according to these teachings, one is sure to reach the Western Pure Land of Ultimate Bliss.

Homage to Amitabha! Amitabha!

A Path to True Happiness

TRUE SINCERITY

towards others

PURITY OF MIND

within

EQUALITY

in everything we see

PROPER UNDERSTANDING

of ourselves and our environment

COMPASSION

by helping others in a wise, unemotional and unconditional way

SEE THROUGH

to the truth of impermanence

LET GO

of all wandering thoughts and attachments

ATTAIN FREEDOM

of mind and spirit

ACCORD WITH CONDITIONS

to go along with the environment

BE MINDFUL OF AMITABHA BUDDHA

following his teachings and vowing to reach the Pure Land

~ From The Teachings of
Ven. Master Chin Kung ~

**With bad advisors forever left behind,
From paths of evil he departs for eternity,
Soon to see the Buddha of Limitless Light
And perfect Samantabhadra's Supreme Vows.**

**The supreme and endless blessings
of Samantabhadra's deeds,
I now universally transfer.
May every living being, drowning and adrift,
Soon return to the Pure Land of
Limitless Light!**

~The Vows of Samantabhadra~

**I vow that when my life approaches its end,
All obstructions will be swept away;
I will see Amitabha Buddha,
And be born in His Western Pure Land of
Ultimate Bliss and Peace.**

**When reborn in the Western Pure Land,
I will perfect and completely fulfill
Without exception these Great Vows,
To delight and benefit all beings.**

**~The Vows of Samantabhadra
Avatamsaka Sutra~**

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May the merit and virtue
accrued from this work
adorn Amitabha Buddha's Pure Land,
repay the four great kindnesses above,
and relieve the suffering of
those on the three paths below.
May those who see or hear of these efforts
generate Bodhi-mind,
spend their lives devoted to the Buddha Dharma,
and finally be reborn together in
the Land of Ultimate Bliss.
Homage to Amita Buddha!

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